

F. DRAFT Compatibility Determinations

In accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Refuge Improvement Act), and Service policy (603 FW 2), this appendix provides Compatibility Determinations (CDs) for the following activities:

Table F-1. Compatibility Determinations for Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Issue	CD Issuance Date	CD Review Date
Annual Bicycling Events	2012	2022
Bicycling	2012	2022
Bison and Longhorn Auction	2012	2022
Boating	2012	2022
Camping	2012	2022
Commercial Art, Filming, and Photography	2012	2022
Commercial Fishing Tournaments	2012	2022
Commercial Interpretive Tours	2012	2022
Commercial Rock Sports	2012	2022
Commercial Scuba Instruction	2012	2022
Environmental Education	2012	2027
Fishing	2012	2027
Grazing	2012	2022
Hiking	2012	2022
Holy City	2012	2022
Hunting	2012	2027
Interpretation	2012	2027
Job Corps	2012	2022
Jogging and Strenuous Walking	2012	2022
Mesonet Weather Station	2012	2022
Mount Baker Repeater	2012	2022
Natural Resource Collection	2012	2022
Photography	2012	2027
Picnicking (Including Rental of Boulder Cabin)	2012	2022
Scuba Diving	2012	2022
Rock Sports	2012	2022
Running Events	2012	2022
Scientific Research	2012	2022
Tree Cutting	2012	2022
Visitor Operation of Amateur Radio Equipment	2012	2022
Wildlife Observation	2012	2027

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Annual Bicycling Events

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

“...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)

“...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)

“... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

For many years, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has been home to annual bicycling events like the Tour de Meers and Tour of the Wichitas. Typically, these non-commercial events are sponsored by local partners like the local fire department. The Tour de Meers is a non-competitive ride occurring each year on the Saturday of Memorial Day Weekend. Similarly, the Tour of the Wichitas is a ride through Fort Sill and the Refuge occurring in June each year in conjunction with the Museum of the Great Plains Bike Festival. Although physical fitness is the primary purpose of each ride, these events stress that cyclists should take the time to look around and enjoy the beauty of the Refuge. Thus, the

events occur in support of wildlife observation, interpretation, and photography, which are priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses. In this manner, annual bicycling events are an existing supportive recreational use. Any organization that wishes to host an annual bicycling event is responsible for contacting the Refuge and receiving a Special Use Permit prior to the event.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Bicycling events may occur on any paved public access roads in the Public Use Area of the Refuge.

c) When is the use conducted?

Tour de Meers is held the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend every year. Tour of the Wichitas is held each year in June. The Refuge will determine appropriate timing for new proposals of similar bicycling events in a Special Use Permit.

d) How is the use conducted?

The Refuge regulates this use through a Special Use Permit issued to the host of the event. The Special Use Permit lists any regulations on the timing, location, magnitude, and method of the events. Event hosts are responsible for educating cyclists on safety information while participating in the annual events.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Annual bicycling events have occurred on the Refuge for many years in the past. These events are proposed because the Refuge provides terrain and landscapes not found anywhere else in southern Oklahoma. The moderately sloping hills of the Refuge provide challenges for both beginning and experienced cyclists, and the wildlife and habitat provide a beautiful setting that will encourage participation in the events.

The events are proposed to bring hundreds of visitors to the Refuge, which will provide an opportunity for the Refuge to conduct public interpretation. The Tour of the Wichitas even includes a water stop at the Visitor Center, where cyclists can pause and learn about the habitats and wildlife on the Refuge. Similarly, the Tour de Meers is a non-competitive race that recommends visitors “linger and take in the natural beauty along the way” (<http://tourdemeers.org/registration.php>). In this manner, these established annual bicycling events occur in support of wildlife observation and interpretation. Only those annual bicycling events that support wildlife-dependent recreation will be allowed on the Refuge.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including bicycling events. Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to continue to allow annual bicycling events on its paved roads. Improvements planned for these roads will benefit Refuge bicycling events. To make these enhancements possible, additions to the bicycling program will require additional time, money, and staff. These enhancements are covered in the Bicycling CD and Project 24a of the CCP. To fully implement and manage the Special Use Permit program (including bicycle events), an additional 0.5 Park Ranger FTE is needed.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Annual bike events, while a short-term and infrequent use on the Refuge, may result in long-term beneficial impacts to the visitor experience. These events may potentially bring hundreds of visitors to the Refuge, which would provide an opportunity for the Refuge to conduct public interpretation, making this activity a wildlife-dependent supportive use. In this manner, these established annual bicycling events occur in support of interpretation and wildlife observation. Only those annual bicycling events that support wildlife-dependent recreation would be allowed on the Refuge. Furthermore, annual bike events could draw more visitors to the Refuge who would participate in other wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the Refuge or those available on nearby lands. In this sense, these bike events may provide short-term benefits to the socioeconomics of the community. Like all other public use activities, annual bicycling events have the potential to adversely impact the physical and biological environment through trash, noise, and wildlife disruption. There is also the potential for conflicts between motorists and bicyclists along the sections of Refuge road that lack shoulders. The Special Use Permit lists any regulations on the timing, location, magnitude, and method of the events to limit any potential adverse effects. Allowing bicycle events to continue would be moderately beneficial, long-term, and localized to widespread. As with the other public use activities, these widespread benefits for bicyclists would extend in scale beyond the boundaries of the Refuge by increasing the public's awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from annual bicycling events. This use occurs in conjunction with wildlife-dependent recreational uses and adds to the available recreational opportunities on the Refuge. Therefore, it may result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that annual bicycling events remain a compatible use:

1. Cyclists are responsible for their own public safety during these annual bicycling events.

2. Littering on the Refuge is prohibited.
3. Permittee will report the annual number of participants to the Refuge.

Justification:

Annual bicycling events occur on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge as a secondary use that facilitates the primary wildlife-dependent recreation uses defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Refuge Improvement Act). Essentially, bicycling facilitates interpretation, wildlife observation, and photography. Regulated bicycling events as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience the Refuge firsthand and develop awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that annual bicycling events, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, are a compatible use that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Bicycling

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Bicycling provides the means of access to various habitats across the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge where visitors may participate in priority wildlife-dependent recreation activities. In this manner, bicycling is an existing secondary recreational use occurring on the Refuge primarily in support of wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation.

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing Refuge use through Public Use Area Management Objective 6: “Improve bicycling opportunities on approximately 13 miles of road to encourage Refuge visitation and wildlife observation and reduced vehicle use on the Refuge within five years of CCP approval.”

b) Where is the use conducted?

Bicycling takes place on the 50 miles of paved roads within the Refuge and on the 5.8-mile Mt. Scott mountain bike trail and access road. Bicycling on paved roads is governed by State regulations; however, there are public safety concerns about bicycling on the Refuge. Most Refuge roads lack adequate shoulders to allow bicyclists to move out of the active travel lane. A project is underway to widen the highway shoulders along the section of State Highways 115 and 49 from the Medicine Park gate west and south to the Cache gate (included as Strategy 4 of Public Use Area Objective 6).

In addition, the Refuge has determined a number of additional bicycling needs through Public Use Area Objective 6, which include creating bike routes (including the Scenic Byway area) to improve the connectivity of existing routes (Lake Elmer Thomas Recreational Area, Lawton, Medicine Park, Cache connections). The Refuge proposes to allow bicycling opportunities in the medium and high density use areas using existing roads and trails and disturbed areas and proposed new trails and linkages. These include the future trail between the Environmental Education Center and the Visitor Center, the trail between the Environmental Education Center and Camp Doris, Jed Johnson tower trail, the future trail between Lake Elmer Thomas Recreational Area (LETRA) and the Refuge (including a connection to the Museum of Natural History), and the Mt. Scott picnic area nature trail (see CCP Chapter 5, project 24a and 25e).

c) When is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors are allowed access for bicycling during daylight hours only. The only restrictions to bicycling occur during fall and winter permit hunts, when foot travel and vehicle travel on secondary roads is restricted.

d) How is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors are allowed to bring bicycles to the Refuge and enjoy this outdoor activity on their own accord. The Refuge is considering the development of a bicycle share pilot program that would facilitate this use, which will be reviewed in the Visitor Services Plan (to be completed in 2014).

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Bicycling offers an unparalleled opportunity to experience the Refuge and observe wildlife. This activity occurs on the Refuge in support of priority wildlife-dependent recreation uses, especially wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation. In fact, cycling enhances many of these opportunities by giving the bicyclist a better chance to view and interact with wildlife up close. Although it is estimated that less than 0.5 percent (7,500) of all Refuge visitation involves bicycling, the sport is growing in popularity. Under Refuge-Wide Objective 2 (Air Quality), the Refuge includes enhancing bicycling opportunities as a means of minimizing potential effects to air quality while still offering the public an enjoyable way to participate in recreational opportunities on the Refuge.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including bicycling. Through the CCP, however, the Refuge

proposes to construct increased linkages, bike routes, and bike lanes, as well as to introduce a bike share program. To make these enhancements possible, additions to the bicycling program will require additional time, money, and staff. Through Project 24a of the CCP, the Refuge aims to manage compatible supportive recreation activities on the Refuge in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resource management activities. The Refuge proposes an additional start-up budget of \$275,500 for hiking and bicycling program management improvements, which includes one-half of a new GS-9 Law Enforcement position, one-fourth of a new GS-9 Park Ranger position, and a study on use thresholds. Annual operating costs for improved program management are estimated at \$75,700. Infrastructure improvements assisting supportive recreation, including bicycling, are listed under Project 25e of the CCP, with an estimated start-up cost of \$2.15 million and an annual operating cost of \$50,000.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Bicycling currently occurs only along paved roadways and the Mt. Scott access road. Bicycling on Refuge roadways is expected to result in negligible impacts to Refuge resources, including any disturbance of wildlife. The small percentage of visitation that occurs for bicycling on roadways will keep any disturbance to wildlife at a negligible level, as vehicle traffic along the same roadways is much higher than bicycle traffic. The impacts of bicycling on the Mt. Scott trail (administrative road) are negligible relative to the use and maintenance by Refuge vehicles. However, these impacts may result in some soil compaction, creation of tire tracks, erosion, and trampling of vegetation. To a limited extent, erosion on the trail has the potential to impact water quality by contributing to suspended sediment, turbidity, and sedimentation. In addition, mountain biking on the trail may have direct impacts on wildlife due to disturbance; however, it is presumed that wildlife have likely become accustomed to humans in areas where existing trails occur for multiple purposes. There are also concerns about the interaction between bicyclists and animals, especially longhorn cattle and bison, and about the safety of bicycles crossing cattleguards. Overall, these adverse resource impacts are expected to be negligible. Bicycling allows the visitor to experience the Refuge and participate in wildlife-dependent opportunities such as wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation and allows participants to engage in outdoor physical fitness activities. This public use opportunity also serves to reduce the Refuge's carbon footprint and adverse air quality impacts associated with vehicle traffic. As with the other public use activities, these widespread benefits for bicyclists would extend in scale beyond the boundaries of the Refuge by increasing the public's awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from bicycling. The use occurs in conjunction with wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation, each of which will ultimately result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review

as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that bicycling remains a compatible use:

1. The Refuge may regulate times, areas, and conditions for bicycling. During fall and winter permit hunts, the Refuge prohibits foot and vehicle travel on trails and secondary roads. This could also include temporary closure of trails seasonally to protect resource values such as nest locations and den sites.
2. Cyclists are required to remain on designated roads and the Mt. Scott trail at all times (no off-road bicycling).
3. Bicycling is restricted to daylight hours only.

Justification:

Bicycling occurs on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge as a secondary use that facilitates the primary wildlife-dependent recreation uses defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Cycling primarily facilitates interpretation, wildlife observation, and photography. Regulated bicycling as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience wildlife firsthand and develop awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish, wildlife, and wilderness resources. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that bicycling, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, is a compatible use that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Bison and Longhorn Auction

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

In order to manage its bison and longhorn populations, the Refuge hosts public auctions each year for the removal of excess animals. This activity is considered a Refuge management economic activity due to the generation of a commodity (the livestock) that is purchased by members of the public.

Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to continue this use to manage longhorn cattle and bison populations.

b) Where is the use conducted?

The Refuge-hosted auctions are held at the main corral system and grandstand that are one-half mile north of the Refuge Headquarters. All the non-Refuge hosted auctions are conducted through one of the local livestock auction yards.

c) When is the use conducted?

The auctions are mainly conducted in the fall, but occasionally a smaller spring sale is necessary.

d) How is the use conducted?

After animals are rounded up, the Refuge sorts and selects animals to be excessed at the public auctions. All registered buyers are notified, and public announcements are made as to time, date, location, and animals to be sold. During public auction, all animals are sold to the highest bidder without reserve and remain the property of the Refuge until loaded into the vehicle designated by the buyer.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The Refuge is tasked with the responsibility of managing herds of bison and longhorns, along with the other species of grazers that reside within the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Management of these herds requires a careful balance of managing utilization of grasslands, conservation genetics to retain high levels of genetic diversity, and excessing a number of animals needed to maintain healthy grasslands. Population levels of bison and longhorns are managed by carefully selecting and selling excess animals through this annual auction, which helps maintain the health of the herd.

Availability of Resources:

On an annual basis, the Refuge reduces its bison and longhorn populations through public auctions. The Refuge has existing staff assigned and volunteers to manage this activity. Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to continue this use in order to maintain populations at stable and manageable numbers. Through Projects 7 and 8 of the CCP, the Refuge aims to manage auctions in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resource management activities. Through Project 26b, the Refuge proposes an additional budget of \$500,000, with a \$10,000 recurring cost to adequately fund the expansion of and updates to the corral system that supports these auctions.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:Short- and Long-term Impacts:

This activity occurs in the existing corrals, adjacent to existing roads, thereby minimizing any adverse impacts to soils, habitat, and waterbodies. The action may result in some level of disturbance to wildlife and longhorns, particularly during the roundup and throughout the placement in corrals, but the duration of this use will not result in any significant resource impacts. Furthermore, the maintenance of grazers at carrying capacity is necessary to ensure the health of these populations and prevent habitat damage from overgrazing across the Refuge. This activity also renders minor positive socioeconomic impacts in the local communities.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are minimal anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from bison and livestock auctions. Ultimately, this activity will add to the health and diversity of these grazers and their grassland habitats on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the physical, biological, and human environment.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that bison and longhorn auctions remain a compatible use:

1. The Refuge will only use auctions for management purposes in order to maintain health of the animals and their habitat.
2. All auctions will be public and animals sold to highest bidder without reserve.

Justification:

The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, as provided for in Part 701, Chapter 8 of the Fish and Wildlife Service manual, by Special Acts of Congress and by special designation, was established for the preservation and the propagation of remnant herds of nationally and/or historically significant animals. Species listed for the Refuge include bison, Rocky Mountain elk, white-tailed deer, and Texas longhorn cattle. Management practices for other resident wildlife will emphasize the protection of breeding stocks and the production of wildlife to achieve and maintain diversity of those species that naturally or historically occurred on the Refuge. Present bison and longhorn management is conducted under this authority and mandated policies. Regulated auctions as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP renders the most practical means of management for maintaining healthy populations of bison and longhorns, and the habitats they occupy. This activity will not significantly conflict with any of the other public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that auctioning bison and longhorn, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, is a compatible use that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Boating

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

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Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
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3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Boating is an existing recreational use occurring on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Although this use is not one of the priority public uses defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, boating is supportive of wildlife-dependent recreational uses, including fishing, wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation.

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing use through Public Use Area Management Objective 7 of the CCP, which states: “Throughout the life of the CCP, manage boating to allow for high quality opportunities and improved experiences.” The use is directly linked

to fishing, which includes boating as a strategy to allow for increased opportunities and improved experiences under Public Use Area Management Objective 1.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Hand powered boats are allowed on the following Refuge lakes, each occurring within the Public Use Area. In addition, electric trolling motors are permitted on boats of 14 feet or less on these lakes.

- Jed Johnson Lake
- Rush Lake
- Quanah Parker Lake
- French Lake
- Lake Elmer Thomas

On Lake Elmer Thomas, there is a paved boat ramp; this is the only location on the Refuge where operation of any size boat or motor, including sailboats, is allowed although a “no-wake” speed limit is enforced. Currently, French, Quanah Parker, and Jed Johnson Lakes have unhardened boat ramps that the Refuge proposes to improve or harden through Refuge-Wide Public Use Facilities Objective 1 of the CCP.

c) When is the use conducted?

Boating is allowed year-round during daylight hours only. During fall and winter permit hunts, vehicle and boat access is further restricted.

d) How is the use conducted?

Through the CCP, the Refuge intends to increase enforcement efforts to prevent littering and alcohol consumption, and to improve compliance with fishing and boating licensing and rules and restrictions (Public Use Area Management Objective 1: Fishing and Objective 7: Boating). These preventative efforts may include increased education, law enforcement, signage, and trash or recycling facilities. In addition, the CCP proposes that the Refuge increase maintenance and harden existing boat ramps in order to provide accessible fishing opportunities.

Through Refuge-Wide Non-Native Fauna Objective 9, the Refuge plans to monitor lakes for zebra mussels and to coordinate with Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to determine way to best prevent mussel introduction. As part of this management, the Refuge is considering a sanitation and washing station at boat ramps.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Boating provides a quiet, uncrowded way to observe wildlife while providing fishing access. These activities are priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System, as stipulated in the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. The Refuge offers the unique opportunity to participate in boating to support these and other wildlife-dependent recreational uses in undeveloped surroundings in a safe, family-friendly location. While the primary purpose of the lakes is to provide a perennial water source for Refuge wildlife and serve as the beginnings of the watershed for many surrounding

creeks, the Refuge lakes are also intended to provide a quality visitor experience within serene surroundings. Boating allows the Refuge to accomplish this.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including boating. Through the CCP, however, the Refuge proposes to increase enforcement of Refuge regulations, improve and better maintain existing unhardened boat ramps, and monitor lakes for zebra mussels. These additions to the boating program will require additional time, money, and staff. The Refuge aims to manage compatible supportive recreation activities on the Refuge in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resource management activities. Through Project 25d of the CCP, the Refuge aims to improve or enhance public use fishing and boating facilities. Additions to the boating program will be considered and prioritized through this supportive recreation improvement project, and improvements on the existing facilities will be considered through the public use facilities maintenance and upgrades. The Refuge proposes an additional budget for improvements to the boating and fishing facilities estimated at \$225,000, with an annual operating cost of \$9,500 per year.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Boating has the potential to adversely impact the Refuge's physical and biological habitat. Use of boats of any size with any type of motor on Lake Elmer Thomas and use of trolling motors on four additional lakes may result in emissions and exhaust, negatively impacting the Refuge's air quality. These boats may also cause wildlife disturbance due to noise and might produce waves that could degrade shorelines; however, the Refuge maintains a no-wake zone on Lake Elmer Thomas to prevent such instances from occurring. The maximum boat size is 14 feet on the four other lakes that allow the use of trolling motors. This stipulation serves to minimize the potential for these types of effects. Nevertheless, the use of any type of motor in Refuge waters may lead to minor effects to water quality resulting from increased pollution, sedimentation, and turbidity.

Other environmental effects may be noted on sites where boat launching occurs. As unpaved ramps are used to launch boats into Refuge lakes, visitors may trample native vegetation, compact soils, and produce litter. The Refuge's proposed action includes strategies that recommend improving or hardening all of the Refuge's boat ramps. This action will help reduce the potential for site-specific adverse impacts, thereby only resulting in short-term negligible impacts to habitat, soils, and vegetation.

Boat use may also cause increased spread of non-native fauna like zebra mussels that can lead to habitat degradation. Zebra mussels cause tremendous modifications and disruptions in freshwater ecosystems. Currently, these mussels do not occur on Refuge lakes. Through the proposed action, the Refuge plans to consider more aggressive and proactive measures to avoid zebra mussel introduction by coordinating with other agencies and organizations, including ODWC. The Refuge is considering a sanitation and washing station at boat ramps to help minimize the potential for this species' introduction. Thus, these increased efforts are expected to maintain the current ecosystem and prevent introduction, keeping environmental impacts negligible.

Alternatively, boating may result in long-term beneficial impacts to the human environment as it supports wildlife observation, photography, fishing, and interpretation. This use may increase the viewers' understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife, their habitat needs, and the role of

the National Wildlife Refuge System in their conservation. The additional hardening of boat ramps will offer increased opportunities for the public to participate in this wildlife-dependent recreational activity while minimizing environmental harm, thereby helping the Refuge to accomplish some of its primary objectives.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from boating. Ultimately, this activity will add to public use opportunities on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment. The wide variety of public use opportunities available on the Refuge will increase public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. This will benefit the Service's overall mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that boating remains a compatible use:

1. Temporary access restrictions may be used to protect sensitive resources from harassment.
2. Personal water craft such as Jet Skis, Sea-Doos, Wave-Runners, etc. are prohibited.
3. Obtaining any type of fishing bait from Refuge lands or harvesting frogs and turtles is prohibited.
4. The Refuge will limit and control Refuge access through enforcement of Refuge regulations, signage, and education of the public as to the purpose of the Refuge and responsibilities of visitors.
5. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited on the Refuge.
6. Swimming is prohibited on the Refuge.
7. No person may use more than five poles or rods while fishing.
8. State daily creel limits apply.
9. Fishing and boating in the Special Use Area of the Refuge is prohibited. This action assures that the primary bald eagle wintering grounds and core black-capped vireo breeding and nesting colony are not disturbed.

Justification:

Boating is a supportive recreational activity secondary to fishing, wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation. This recreational use enhances the fishing experience by giving Refuge visitors a chance to experience the Refuge’s waterbodies in a comfortable, peaceful, and safe manner. Because similar opportunities exist nearby, the Refuge only allows the use of non-motorized boats or trolling motors on five lakes. Lake Elmer Thomas is cooperatively managed, and the Refuge allows all types of boats to be used there. Regulated boating as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience fish and wildlife firsthand while also developing an understanding of the Refuge’s role in conservation through the National Wildlife Refuge System. This activity will not conflict with any of the priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that boating, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Camping

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Camping is an existing recreational use on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Although this use is not one of the priority public uses, camping is supportive of wildlife-dependent recreation. Camping can increase the public’s awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources.

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing recreational use through Public Use Objective 8 in the CCP: “Provide year-round developed camping opportunities at established campgrounds and promote alternatives off-Refuge for times of high demand within six years of CCP approval.” In addition, the Refuge intends to provide opportunities

for limited backcountry camping in Charons Garden to allow for a wilderness experience through Wilderness Area Management Objective 5.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Camping is allowed only at Doris Campground and Fawn Creek Youth Campground within the Public Use Area and throughout a designated area within the backcountry of the Charons Garden Wilderness Area. These locations are highlighted on the Public Use Facilities map in the CCP.

c) When is the use conducted?

The Refuge offers camping opportunities year-round. Prime camping season extends from mid-March to late June, with a second peak occurring in September and October when the weather cools. During prime camping season and on holiday weekends, the demand for campsites far exceeds supply. At these times, un-served campers are directed to the gateway communities for lodging or other area campground facilities at Lake Elmer Thomas Recreation Area, Lake Lawtonka, Great Plains, and Tom Steed State Park.

At Doris Campground, gates are open during the following hours:

	Sunday through Thursday	Friday and Saturday
April 1 – October 31	8 AM – 10 AM	8 AM – 11 AM
November 1 – March 31	8 AM – 8 PM	8 AM – 10 PM

d) How is the use conducted?

Doris Campground is operated under a contract and includes 90 individual and 3 group sites. These sites include 20 walk-in tent sites, 23 RV sites with electricity, and 47 RV sites without electricity. Potable water, a shower house, and a sanitary dump station are available in the campground. Single camp sites are open to the general public on a first come, first served basis, and the three group sites are available for reservation.

Fawn Creek Campground is reserved for organized youth groups up through university-aged student groups. The campground offers three group sites available for reservation that can accommodate groups of 8 to 30 individuals. No water or electricity is available. Fees are charged at Fawn Creek for each group with stays allowed up to one week.

The Refuge also offers a rare and unique opportunity for visitors to experience backcountry camping in Charons Garden Wilderness Area. The Refuge will distribute up to 10 backcountry camping permits to interested parties on a twice a week basis. Limiting this use will protect wilderness character while allowing the use. To limit impacts, the Refuge will implement Leave No Trace techniques through brochures and signs. In addition, the Refuge will participate in the National Wildlife Refuge System Wilderness Character Monitoring Committee’s efforts to monitor how Refuge management, including public use opportunities, affects Wilderness.

Due to the high demand for camping, the Refuge has decided to also promote additional opportunities off the Refuge during prime camping season by working with partners. For

example, the CCP proposes to create a pedestrian and bicycle connection from the Refuge high-use density zone to adjacent campgrounds off-Refuge.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The Refuge is home to one of the largest and busiest interpretation and outreach programs in the National Wildlife Refuge System, and camping is directly related to this use and to all of the priority public uses. Visitation at Doris Campground has averaged over 31,370 campers per year for the last five years. Public use of the youth group sites at Fawn Creek Campground has steadily increased over the last 10 years, with an average of 7,200 campers per year. The Wilderness area averages about 1,500 campers per year as well. Cumulatively, the camping opportunities on the Refuge provide a chance for over 40,000 people to experience nature in the unique setting that a national wildlife refuge offers. These individuals travel to the Refuge to enjoy the outdoors while also gaining an understanding of how the natural world and human activities are intertwined. While not a wildlife-dependent recreational use, camping is compatible with the purpose of the Refuge.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including camping. To administer Doris Campground, the Refuge contracts a host family who is able to live on the Refuge in exchange for administering this use at that particular location. Through this agreement, the Refuge is able to provide recreational camping opportunities for Refuge visitors while minimizing the amount of Refuge resources necessary to provide, maintain, and monitor the use. At Fawn Creek Youth Campground and throughout the backcountry of Charons Garden, Refuge resources are mainly required for taking reservations, answering inquiries, providing backcountry permits, hosting or assisting environmental education or interpretation programs during youth camps, and monitoring the use. The Refuge, however, is able to offset some of its costs through fee collection associated with this use.

On all three camping locations, existing Refuge staff and budget is adequate to facilitate the use. Through Projects 12 and 13 of the CCP, the Refuge aims to manage compatible supportive recreation activities on the Refuge in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resources. Funding and staffing needs related to continuing or altering an existing supportive recreational use will be considered and prioritized through this supportive recreation improvement project. It is not anticipated that any changes will require a significant amount of additional time, money, or staff, however.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Camping has the potential to adversely impact the physical and biological environment at the site-specific areas where the use is allowed. Camping may result in disturbance to wildlife, including white-tailed deer, elk, raptors, and passerine birds, especially during prime camping seasons; however, with an average of over 40,000 Refuge campers each year, it is likely that wildlife species on the Refuge have acclimated to human presence, especially in designated camping areas where the use has occurred for many years. Nevertheless, individuals who wander off trail in areas nearby designated camping facilities may cause soil compaction, trampling of vegetation, plant destruction, illegal trail establishment, trail deterioration, and production of litter or human

waste. These on-the-ground conditions may result in adverse impacts to soils, habitat, and water quality; however, the Refuge enforces regulations and ensures that campgrounds are patrolled to help defray any potential negative impacts.

In Charons Garden Wilderness Area, camping is restricted to designated areas and camping numbers are such that no more than 10 individuals may be camping on any given day. These restrictions are done to maintain the wilderness character of the area while providing opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation. Although this use may result in similar impacts as mentioned here, the limit on the intensity of the use will likely prevent any long-term negative impacts. Furthermore, offering this wilderness experience to Refuge visitors will further their understanding of nature in its most intact state.

Camping may also result in long-term beneficial impacts to the visitor experience and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Camping is supportive of all six of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses allowed on the Refuge, which will increase public awareness of the Refuge and conservation issues. Furthermore, camping may draw more visitors to the Refuge who participate in other wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the Refuge or those available on nearby lands. In this sense, camping may provide short-term benefits to the socioeconomics of the community. This use may also increase the viewers' understanding and appreciation of wildlife and their habitat needs as well as the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System in resource conservation.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from camping. Ultimately, this activity will add to available public use opportunities on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment. The wide variety of public use opportunities available on the Refuge will increase public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. This will benefit the Service's overall mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

- Use is Not Compatible
- Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that camping remains a compatible use:

1. During periods of high fire danger, camping permits will not be issued in the interest of public safety and resource protection.
2. Possession of alcoholic beverages is prohibited on the Refuge, including the camping areas.

3. Fires are allowed only in Doris Campground and Fawn Creek Campground. Fires must be built in grates and grills provided for that purpose. Dead, fallen timber may be used. Fires must not be left unattended and must be completely extinguished before leaving the area. During periods of very high fire danger, wood fires may be prohibited. Campfires and open fires of any kind are strictly prohibited in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area.
4. Campers may not trench around tents or level off tent sites.
5. All garbage must be packed out with campers in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area.
6. Swimming, wading, and snorkeling are prohibited on the Refuge.
7. Campers may not participate in hiking outside of daylight hours. Night fishing in designated lakes is allowed after dark.
8. Pets are permitted at campgrounds if confined or kept on a leash. All livestock are prohibited.

Justification:

Camping is a supportive recreational activity secondary to wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, hunting, and fishing. In addition, camping at the Fawn Creek Campground supports environmental education in certain instances when youth groups request formal lectures. Thus, this recreational use enhances the wildlife experience by giving the camper a better chance to view and interact with wildlife up close. Although similar opportunities exist nearby, the Refuge's campgrounds allow visitors to camp at a central location at night while participating in other wildlife-dependent recreational pursuits throughout the day. Regulated camping as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience the Refuge in a high-quality, safe, wholesome, and enjoyable recreational experience. This activity will not conflict with any of the priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that camping, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Commercial Art, Filming, and Photography

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Commercial art, filming, and photography are existing supportive uses occurring on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. This use occurs when commercial operators come to the Refuge to produce art, film, or photography using professional equipment or provide a for-profit instructional event (class). The resulting product is typically bought or sold for profit. This use requires a Special Use Permit.

b) Where is the use conducted?

The use would occur only within the Refuge's Public Use Area unless otherwise specially allowed. Specific regulations on locations will be explained in the Special Use Permit.

c) When is the use conducted?

Commercial art, filming, and photography may occur year-round during daylight hours only. Specific regulations on timing will be explained in the Special Use Permit.

d) How is the use conducted?

Commercial art, filming, and photography must be tied to the Refuge's conservation purpose through the documentation of scenery, wildlife, or other natural objects in various media. Participants would be required to obtain a Special Use Permit to conduct their activities on the Refuge. Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to continue this use by mandating a Special Use Permit. The permittee would be required to follow the terms of the permit, including the locations of the Refuge allowed for a particular use and the methods for which it is conducted and other provisions necessary to protect resources. The Refuge would also do more public outreach so that these groups are aware of the need to obtain a permit. Law enforcement would help the Refuge ensure that groups are obtaining and following their permit correctly.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Commercial art, filming, and photography will bring new visitors to the Refuge each year, and their products will reach hundreds. This use provides an opportunity for visitors to learn about the Refuge's natural resources. The Refuge will provide informational brochures about the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System, which will further goals of the Refuge, the Refuge System, and the Service. These activities provide a value added service to the public, allowing them to appreciate and understand the conservation value of the Refuge. This level of awareness can lead to support for the Refuge System, for wildlife conservation, and for resource management issues.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including some pre-approved commercial uses. Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to better manage, control, and/or restrict commercial uses as necessary. To make these enforcements possible, changes to the Special Use Permit program will be made. It is anticipated that these changes will require additional time, money, or staff, however. To fully implement and manage the Special Use Permit program (including commercial filming, photography, and art), an additional 0.5 Park Ranger FTE is needed at a start-up cost of \$91,000 and an annual operating cost of \$45,000. Through the CCP, the Refuge aims to manage compatible supportive recreation activities, including some commercial uses, on the Refuge in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resource management activities.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

These activities could result in adverse effects that come from large groups congregating on the Refuge. To reduce the potential for any adverse effects, each activity would be evaluated individually and would only be approved and permitted when only minimal impacts to Refuge resources and existing wildlife-dependent recreation can be assured. On the other hand, commercial activities, while a short-term and infrequent use on the Refuge, may result in long-term beneficial impacts to the visitor experience. These activities could potentially bring visitors to the Refuge to participate in uses supportive of interpretation, photography, and wildlife observation, making these uses supportive of wildlife-dependent uses.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from commercial art, filming, and photography. This use occurs in conjunction with wildlife-dependent recreational uses and adds to the available recreational opportunities on the Refuge. There is a potential for adverse effects from the gathering of large groups; however, the Refuge will monitor and regulate this use to ensure that these groups are not too large or occurring too frequently to cause resource damage or user conflict. Therefore, this use may result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

- Use is Not Compatible
- Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that commercial art, filming, and photography remain a compatible use:

1. Permittee will comply with all Refuge regulations.
2. Harassment of wildlife will be prohibited.
3. Commercial art, filming, and photography may only occur where authorized by the permit. Gathering areas will be permit-specific based on maximum potential group size.
4. Permittee will not disrupt the activities of other visitors or the normal use of the Refuge.
5. The permittee will not pose a public health or safety risk.

6. The permittee is responsible for ensuring that all employees, party members, contractors, and any other persons working for the permittee and conducting activities allowed by this permit are familiar with and adhere to conditions of the permit and all Refuge regulations.
7. Commercial art, filming, and photography must be tied to the Refuge's conservation purpose through the documentation of scenery, wildlife, or other natural objects in various media.
8. Permittee will submit annual report of activities conducted on the Refuge.
9. The permit may be terminated at any time by the Refuge due to non-compliance with stipulations of this permit or to protect the resources.
10. Permit will include a fee to support administration of the use.

Justification:

Commercial art, filming, and photography occur on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge as a secondary use that facilitates the primary wildlife-dependent recreation uses defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Though there is a commercial element to this activity, these events occur in support of wildlife observation and photography which are priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses. In this manner, commercial art, filming, and photography are existing supportive uses. Regulated commercial uses as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience wildlife firsthand and develop awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources. This activity will have minimal, if any, conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that these commercial uses, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, are compatible uses that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Commercial Fishing Tournaments

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Commercial fishing tournaments are an existing use occurring on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Though there is a commercial element to this activity, these events occur in support of fishing which is a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use. In this manner, commercial fishing tournaments are an existing supportive recreational use. These tournaments require a Special Use Permit.

Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to continue this use on Lake Elmer Thomas by requiring the issuance of a Special Use Permit for commercial users. The permittee would be required to follow the terms of the permit, including the locations of the Refuge allowed

for a particular use and the methods for which it is conducted. The Refuge would also do more public outreach so that these groups are aware of the need to obtain a permit, and law enforcement would help the Refuge ensure that groups are obtaining and following their permit correctly. Fishing tournaments will be conducted in cooperation and partnership with ODWC and Fort Sill according to the MOU held between these groups. These tournaments will also be managed in accordance with Service policy and regulations.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Commercial fishing tournaments are allowed only in Lake Elmer Thomas within the Public Use Area.

c) When is the use conducted?

Fishing tournaments may occur year-round during daylight hours only.

d) How is the use conducted?

Tournament organizers are allowed access for fishing tournaments through a Special Use Permit only. The Special Use Permit regulates the timing, location, method, and duration of the allowable use.

Through Refuge-Wide Non-Native Fauna Objective 9, the Refuge plans to monitor lakes for zebra mussels and to coordinate with Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation to determine way to best prevent mussel introduction. As part of this management, the Refuge is considering a sanitation and washing station at boat ramps.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Fishing tournaments are an existing use supportive of fishing, one of the six priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System, as stipulated in the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. ODWC determines State fishing regulations and is the primary law enforcement agency for State fishing areas. While the primary purpose of the lakes is to provide a perennial water source for Refuge wildlife and serve as the beginnings of the watershed for many surrounding creeks, they also provide a high quality fishing experience within serene surroundings. Existing and planned infrastructure developments like fishing piers, parking lots, and impoundment structures at Lake Elmer Thomas support this use. This use offers the perfect opportunity to instill an understanding and appreciation for the purpose and mission of the Refuge.

Commercial tournaments will bring hundreds of new visitors to the Refuge each year. This use provides an opportunity for visitors to learn about the Refuge's natural resources. The Refuge will provide informational brochures about the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System, which will further goals of the Refuge, the Refuge System, and the Service. These activities provide a value added service to the public, allowing them to appreciate and understand the conservation value of the Refuge. This level of awareness can lead to support for the Refuge System, for wildlife conservation, and for resource management issues.

Availability of Resources:

Staff time would be required to administer and manage this activity. Expenses associated with management and monitoring of commercial fishing tournaments include fuel use, maintenance costs to Refuge vehicles, inspection and maintenance of associated facilities, education efforts, visitor contacts, and sign posting. Additions and enhancements to the fishing program as a whole will be addressed in the Fishing CD. To fully implement and manage the Special Use Permit program (including fishing tournaments), an additional 0.5 Park Ranger FTE is needed at a start-up cost of \$91,000 and an annual operating cost of \$45,000.

Refuge staff also plans to update the existing Fisheries Management Plan (2002) by 2017, as stated in Chapter 5 of the CCP. The step-down planning process will include an initial review period to determine if the activity is occurring at appropriate locations and levels, as well as if a quality recreational experience is being provided. Then, the Refuge will determine what, if any, changes to make to the fishing program. This process will require input from the Refuge Manager, Biology staff, and Visitor Services staff, as well as staff time and money.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Commercial fishing tournaments have the potential to adversely impact the Refuge's physical and biological habitat. Use of boats of any size with any type of motor on Lake Elmer Thomas may result in emissions and exhaust negatively impacting the Refuge's air quality. These boats may also cause wildlife disturbance due to noise and might produce waves that could degrade shorelines; however, the Refuge maintains a no-wake zone on Lake Elmer Thomas to prevent such instances from occurring.

To reduce the potential for any adverse effects, each tournament would be evaluated individually and would only be approved and permitted when only minimal impacts to Refuge resources and existing wildlife-dependent recreation functions can be assured. These activities could result in adverse effects that come from large groups congregating on the Refuge, especially on the banks of Lake Elmer Thomas. Fishing tournaments could result in adverse impacts to the visitor experience for other Refuge users.

Boat use associated with commercial fishing tournaments may also cause increased spread of non-native fauna like zebra mussels that can lead to habitat degradation. Zebra mussels cause tremendous modifications and disruptions in freshwater ecosystems. Currently, these mussels do not occur on Refuge lakes. Through the proposed action, the Refuge plans to consider more aggressive and proactive measures to avoid zebra mussel introduction by coordinating with other agencies and organizations, including ODWC. The Refuge is considering a sanitation and washing station at boat ramps to help minimize the potential for this species' introduction. Thus, these increased efforts are expected to maintain the current ecosystem and help prevent introduction, keeping environmental impacts negligible.

Alternatively, commercial fishing tournaments may result in long-term beneficial impacts to the human environment, as they support fishing on the Refuge. This activity could bring new visitors to the Refuge to participate in tournaments, resulting in a beneficial impact to these visitors. This use may increase the viewers' understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife, their habitat needs, and the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System in their conservation.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are some minor to moderate adverse cumulative impacts resulting from fishing tournaments and the gathering of large groups when combined with the normal use of the Refuge. These impacts include fish mortality, disturbance to wildlife, vegetation trampling, erosion, and public use conflict. To mitigate these adverse effects, the Refuge will monitor and regulate this use to ensure that these groups are not too large or occurring too frequently to cause resource damage. The Refuge will also limit the number of tournaments held to protect resources and to maintain the quality of experiences for other Refuge users.

Ultimately, this activity will add to public use opportunities on the Refuge, which will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment. However, other Refuge users such as bird watchers, wildlife photographers, and environmental educators occasionally experience conflicts with large groups of people on the Refuge (especially large and/or noisy groups). Rather than direct conflict, however, more commonly the reaction of these other users is to avoid popular gathering areas to seek solitude and a more undisturbed atmosphere elsewhere. Socioeconomic impacts are positive for area motels, service stations, and restaurants.

The wide variety of public use opportunities available on the Refuge will increase public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. This will benefit the Service's overall mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that commercial fishing tournaments remain a compatible use:

1. Permittee will comply with all Refuge regulations.
2. Harassment of wildlife will be prohibited.
3. Commercial tournaments may only occur where authorized by the permit. Gathering areas will be permit-specific based on maximum potential group size.
4. Permittee will not disrupt the activities of other visitors or the normal use of the Refuge.
5. The permittee will not pose a public health or safety risk.

6. The permittee is responsible for ensuring that all employees, party members, contractors, and any other persons working for the permittee and conducting activities allowed by this permit are familiar with and adhere to conditions of the permit and all Refuge regulations.
7. The permit may be terminated at any time by the Refuge due to non-compliance with stipulations of this permit or to protect the resources.
8. Permit will include a fee to support administration of the use.

Justification:

Fishing tournaments are an existing secondary use on the Refuge that facilitates fishing, one of the primary wildlife-dependent recreation uses defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Regulated fishing tournaments as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience wildlife firsthand and develop awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources. Appropriate mitigation measures will be required to ensure this activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that fishing tournaments, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, is a compatible use that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Commercial Interpretive Tours

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination addresses commercial interpretive tours on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for the purpose of interpretation and charge a fee or tuition for their service are required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge.

Typically, this use involves motor coaches or buses transporting groups of individuals across the Refuge, though such tours may be conducted by bicycle, on foot, or self-led tours via rental bicycles. Tour group leaders usually present Refuge information that focuses on the natural history and current management of key Refuge species (bison, elk,

turkey, black-tailed prairie dog, black-capped vireo, and other species) and their habitats, public land management and stewardship, and emerging issues such as climate change and energy conservation. Such commercial tours are not a priority public use, but they occur in support of wildlife observation and interpretation while providing access to the Refuge where the public may participate in other wildlife-dependent recreational uses. These uses require commercial operators to receive a Special Use Permit from the Refuge Manager prior to conducting interpretive tours.

b) Where is the use conducted?

The proposed commercial use would be allowed on the paved roads and managed trails in the high and medium use density areas of the Refuge (see Figure G-2 of the CCP). This restriction is designed to reduce conflicts between user groups and control the impacts of group size on wildlife and designated wilderness. All commercial interpretive uses would be limited to specific, developed public use areas. Only the Friends of the Wichitas-led tours would be allowed in the Special Use Area.

High Density Use Zone: Groups of any size and/or groups using motor coaches would be permitted to use the Public Use Area along State Highway 49 between the Medicine Park gate and the Visitor Center. Permitted stops would include Mt. Scott, Mt. Scott Picnic area, the Holy City, Jed Johnson tower, and the Visitor Center. A stop at the Turkey Creek prairie dog interpretive site would also be permitted although it is in the medium density use zone.

Medium Density Use Zone: Groups of up to 30 people would be permitted to use all locations in the high density use zone, and would be permitted to use the Lost Lake, Boulder Cabin, and Boulder Creek Picnic areas, the Kite Trail, the Turkey Creek prairie dog interpretive site, and the Dog Run Hollow National Recreation Trail system including both French Lake trailheads.

No permits will be allowed for commercial interpretive activities in the low density use zone in order to protect wilderness characteristics or in the Special Use Area.

See Figure G-2. Public Use Density Zones

c) When is the use conducted?

Commercial use would be permitted Mondays through Thursdays year-round, with holidays excluded from the commercial use period. From March through May, commercial tours would be limited to the hours after 1:00 p.m. to reduce conflict with the large number of school groups the Refuge hosts during the spring.

d) How is the use conducted?

Commercial interpretive vendors would be required to obtain a Special Use Permit to conduct a tour or rent bicycles on the Refuge. Vendors would be required to provide all transportation and marketing, provide proof of insurance, schedule a tour at least 1 month in advance, and engage a Refuge staff member or Refuge volunteer to provide interpretive services while on the Refuge. A Refuge trained interpreter is a core requirement for any commercial interpretive tour vendor. Requiring the vendor to use a Refuge-trained interpreter ensures that the quality, tone, and content of the commercial tour meet interpretive standards, and allows the Refuge to meet interpretive and outreach goals.

Commercial bus operators in the region have historically paid \$5.00 per passenger for this type of interpretive service. The Friends of the Wichitas (Friends) also charge \$5.00 per person for their interpretive tours of the Refuge.

e) Why is the use conducted?

The interpretive bus and hiking tours offered by the Friends are very popular. Demand for these interpretive tours far exceeds the Friends' staffing capacity. For several years, commercial operators have asked for access to the Refuge and for interpretive assistance on their tours. A visitor willing to pay for a commercial tour is a good target audience for value added interpretation on the Refuge.

Commercial interpretive tours will bring hundreds of new visitors to the Refuge each year and bring new awareness and appreciation to return visitors. This provides an opportunity for the Refuge to conduct public interpretation and outreach. The Refuge will provide informational brochures about the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System, which will further goals of the Refuge, the Refuge System, and the Service. These tours provided a value added service to the public, allowing them to appreciate and understand the conservation value of the Refuge. This level of awareness can lead to support for the Refuge System, for wildlife conservation, and for resource management issues.

Availability of Resources:

Base operational funds combined with recreational fees that would be made available as a result of this use would be adequate to manage commercial bus tours activities. A \$100.00 annual permit fee will be collected from each vendor regardless of how many tours are conducted. The revenue collected from the Special Use Permit will in part be returned to the Refuge through the recreation fee program for use in management of commercial and interpretive services. The fee covers the administrative workload associated with each permit which requires about 1 day per permittee per year to maintain a special use file, coordinate Refuge staff review, issue annual permits, collect fees, ensure licenses and certifications are current, and complete annual reporting. The \$5.00 per person charge covers the cost of providing the interpretive service. If the Refuge Manger determines that the vendor does not need a Refuge interpreter because of appropriately trained staff, the permit will require field monitoring for compliance with the interpretive and other terms of the permit. To fully implement and manage the Special Use Permit program (including commercial interpretive tours), an additional 0.5 Park Ranger FTE is needed at a start-up cost of \$91,000 and an annual operating cost of \$45,000.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

The Refuge already receives over 1.5 million visitors each year. The vast majority of these visitors engage in wildlife observation, using personal vehicles on Refuge maintained roadways. Readily available, commercial interpretive tours would offer the public an alternative method of engaging in wildlife observation, a priority public use. Commercial tours would benefit the Refuge by offering an energy-efficient, organized, content driven method of facilitating large numbers of people engaged in observation. It also has the potential to reduce the number of cars traveling on Refuge roads.

Under the current Visitor Services staffing level, the Refuge can accommodate 1 commercial tour per day, with a maximum of 224 tours per year. Using an average ridership rate of 30 people per tour, this translates to about 6,720 people that the Refuge could reach each year with a very high quality interpretive and observation experience. While these 6,720 people might have visited the Refuge in their private vehicles if the commercial service had not been available, we would not have been able to reach them with a focused presentation. It is expected that we could reach the current maximum tour level of 224 tours per year within the first 3 to 5 years that the Refuge permits commercial interpretive tours. However, the \$5.00 per person interpretive service charge could provide up to \$33,600 per year to fund additional interpretive staff.

Potential negative impacts are those associated with any increase in visitation: trampling of vegetation, disturbance to wildlife, littering, increased facility maintenance need, and potential conflicts with other visitors.

No long-term impacts beyond the issues identified here are anticipated. The Refuge already manages visitation and recreational use within the 24,088 acre designated Public Use Area. Because of the Refuge's combined administrative oversight and law enforcement focus on public use activities, direct impacts from commercial bus tours administered through commercial tour permits should have minimal or negligible impact to fish and wildlife resources, other Refuge resources, and other Refuge users. The increased visitation would have minimal impacts to the Refuge because access would be limited to low visitation periods in areas with existing public use infrastructure capable of supporting high levels of visitor use.

If the demand for commercial interpretive service grows beyond the capacity of the existing Visitor Services Staff, the interpretive service charge could fund additional temporary staff or interns.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from commercial interpretive tours. This use occurs in conjunction with wildlife-dependent recreational uses and adds to the available recreational opportunities on the Refuge. Therefore, it may result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

- Use is Not Compatible
- Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that commercial interpretive tours remain a compatible use:

1. Permittee will comply with all Refuge regulations.
2. Commercial interpretive tours may only occur within the Public Use Area of the Refuge. Routes and stops will be permit-specific based on maximum potential group size.
3. Permittee will not disrupt the activities of other visitors or the normal use of the Refuge.
4. The permittee will not pose a public health or safety risk.
5. The permittee is responsible for ensuring that all employees, party members, contractors and any other persons working for the permittee and conducting activities allowed by this permit are familiar with and adhere to conditions of the permit and all Refuge regulations.
6. Permittee will submit annual report of number of clients and trips, location of trips, dates and length of stay on Refuge, group size, and other related information.
7. The permittee shall maintain, throughout the use period specified on the permit, insurance covering his/her interpretive tour operation.
8. The permit may be terminated at any time by the Refuge due to non-compliance with stipulations of this permit or to protect the resources.
9. Permit will include a fee to support administration of the use.

Justification:

A goal of the Refuge System is to provide opportunities for the public to develop an understanding and appreciation for wildlife on refuges those opportunities are compatible. Commercial interpretive tours will contribute to the achievement of this goal and the fulfillment of the Refuge System mission. By allowing commercial interpretive tours, the visiting public will have a better understanding and appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation and management, the purpose of the Refuge, and the mission of the Refuge System. This use will directly support the priority public uses of wildlife observation and interpretation.

Wildlife observation and interpretation are priority public uses of the Refuge System. Providing quality, appropriate, and compatible opportunities for these activities contributes to fulfilling provisions of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. Wildlife observation and interpretation provide excellent forums for promoting increased awareness, understanding, and support of trust resources and programs of the Service. The stipulations outlined here should minimize potential impacts relative to wildlife/human interactions. At the current and anticipated levels of visitation, this use would not detract from the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System or Purpose of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Commercial Rock Sports

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Rock sports are an existing historic use occurring on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Rock sports include traditional climbing, rappelling, and bouldering—activities that require specialized equipment such as ropes, harnesses, anchors, and pads. While engaging in rock sports, individuals also engage in wildlife-dependent recreation through wildlife observation and interpretation. In this manner, rock sports are an existing supportive recreational use. Commercial rock sports users are groups or individuals that charge a fee to lead people for guided or instructional rock climbing activities on the Refuge.

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing Refuge use through Public Use Area Management Objective 11, “Within one year of CCP approval, manage rock sport opportunities to provide for better protection of Refuge resources by increasing, improving, and maintaining administration of these activities.”

b) Where is the use conducted?

Rock sports are allowed throughout the Public Use Area of the Refuge, with the notable exception of no rappelling in the Narrows. The primary rock sport areas of the Refuge are located at Mt. Scott, the Meadows, the Narrows, and several locations within the Charons Garden Wilderness Area. However, group size would be limited based on geographic area to reduce conflicts between user groups and to control the impacts of group size on wildlife and designated Wilderness. See Figure G-2 in the CCP.

High Density Use Zone: Groups of any size can be permitted to use the high density use zone between the Medicine Park Gate and the Visitor Center, which includes the Mt. Scott climbing walls.

Medium Density Use Zone: Groups of up to 30 people would be permitted to use the Narrows, Forty Foot Hole, and Dog Run Hollow Trail area, as well as Mt. Scott.

Low Density Use Zone: Groups of less than 15 individuals would be permitted to use the low density use area, which includes Charons Garden and all other rock sport areas in other use zones.

Large and medium-sized groups could be permitted to use the Low Density Use Zone group area if they obtain a Special Use Permit in advance.

See Figure G-2 in the CCP.

c) When is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors may engage in rock sports on the Refuge year-round during daylight hours only.

d) How is the use conducted?

Commercial rock sports participants would be required to obtain a Special Use Permit to conduct their activities on the Refuge. They would be expected to follow the terms of that permit as far as location, timing, and methods allowable for the use, and other provisions necessary to protect resources. The Refuge works in collaboration with the Wichita Mountains Climbers Coalition (WMCC) to ensure that rock sports do not impact other user groups or the natural resource and to manage the installation and replacement of permanent anchors.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The high quality granite domes, slabs, and boulders of the Refuge offer some of the finest rock sports in the southwest and opportunities for group instruction. Multi-pitch routes set in an undeveloped landscape provide the climbing community unparalleled opportunities to experience the wildlife and wild places of the Refuge. It is estimated that only a small fraction of all Refuge visitors engage in commercial rock sports, but this level of use is of

great importance to the rock climbing community due to limited opportunities nearby. This use also facilitates wildlife observation and interpretation, both of which are priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses. These activities provide a value added service to the public, allowing them to appreciate and understand the conservation value of the Refuge. This level of awareness can lead to support for the Refuge System, for wildlife conservation, and for resource management issues.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including commercial rock sports. Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to better manage, control, and/or restrict commercial uses as necessary. To make these enforcements possible, changes to the Special Use Permit program will be made. It is anticipated that these changes will require additional time, money, or staff. To fully implement and manage the Special Use Permit program, an additional 0.5 Park Ranger FTE is needed at a start-up cost of \$91,000 and an annual operating cost of \$45,000. Through the CCP, the Refuge aims to manage compatible supportive recreation activities, including some commercial uses, on the Refuge in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resources.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Potential negative environmental impacts associated with climbing activity include soil erosion and removal of vegetation, primarily through trail proliferation from climbers seeking foot access to climbing routes. Potential habitat damage from actual climbing includes reduction in coverage and species diversity of lichens and possible damage to spikemosses, lipferns, and other rooted vascular vegetation. Use of permanent climbing anchors (bolts) is also identified as an environmental concern, particularly in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area, with possible impacts including aesthetic degradation and effects on the rock itself.

Probably the most harmful impact to Refuge fauna is human disturbance in the limited and specialized habitats used by climbers. Wildlife impacts include behavioral changes for some species, which can interfere with reproduction and thus lower productivity. Most animals react to human disturbance by avoidance and leaving the disturbed area, although this impact is very difficult to quantify. Based purely on numbers of participants, rock sports would appear to have fewer impacts than other and more popular public uses such as hiking, picnicking, camping, etc.

Impacts to endangered species are believed to be minimal. Black-capped vireos utilize the Charons Garden Wilderness Area, but studies to date have not shown impact on vireos from climbing activity. Indirect impacts of climbing include relationships between climbers and other Refuge visitors. One indirect effect of climbing is its visual impact. Some Refuge visitors are attracted to climbing and rappelling activity (a spectator sport).

A growing issue in the Public Use Area of the Refuge is the relationship between group size and the impact on other visitors and on wildlife. Large groups (over 15 people) tend to produce more noise, which distracts from the quality of other visitors' experience and disrupts wildlife.

Other Refuge visitors seeking solitude and a more undisturbed wilderness atmosphere tend to avoid climbing areas. Socioeconomic impacts are positive for area motels, service stations, and restaurants. Other Refuge users such as bird watchers, wildlife photographers, and environmental

educators occasionally experience conflicts with rappellers (especially large and/or noisy groups). Rather than direct conflict, however, more commonly the reaction of these other users is to avoid popular climbing areas to seek solitude and a more undisturbed wilderness atmosphere elsewhere. More detailed discussion of impacts, including literature references, are included in the environmental assessment.

Cumulative Impacts:

Cumulative effects of climbing and other public use are difficult to quantify, but climbing is only one of several uses that contributes to such negative environmental impacts as soil erosion and vegetation removal (trail proliferation), as well as wildlife disturbance impacts. Rock sports occur in conjunction with wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation, each of which will ultimately result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that rock sports remain a compatible use:

1. Some locations or sites may be closed seasonally when necessary to protect resources (i.e., nest locations, den sites)
2. The Refuge will prohibit rappelling in the Narrows.
3. All rock sport participants must register on site so the Refuge can monitor use patterns (such as the type of use, area of use, group size, etc.) and public safety.
4. Permittee will comply with all Refuge regulations.
5. Harassment of wildlife will be prohibited.
6. Commercial rock sports may only occur where authorized by the permit. Gathering areas will be permit-specific based on maximum potential group size.
7. Permittee will not disrupt the activities of other visitors or the normal use of the Refuge.
8. The permittee will not pose a public health or safety risk.

9. The permittee is responsible for ensuring that all employees, party members, contractors, and any other persons working for the permittee and conducting activities allowed by this permit are familiar with and adhere to conditions of the permit and all Refuge regulations.
10. Permittee will submit annual report of activities conducted on the Refuge.
11. The permit may be terminated at any time by the Refuge due to non-compliance with stipulations of this permit or to protect the resources.
12. Permit will include a fee to support administration of the use.
13. Permittee will not install or replace any permanent anchors (bolts) without the review and approval of the Refuge in consultation with the Wichita Mountains Climbers Coalition Advisory Bolting Committee (WMCC ABC).

Justification:

The proposed action takes into account the major resource and environmental concerns, as well as socioeconomic factors such as past history and management of technical rock climbing on the Refuge and restrictions on other Refuge recreationists. It recognizes that climbing, with certain environmental and ethical restrictions, is a legitimate recreational activity that has been historically allowed on the Refuge. It provides a primitive recreational activity in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area consistent with the purpose of the Wilderness Act and subordinate to Refuge purposes. Through establishment of the WMCC ABC and overall efforts to foster a spirit of genuine cooperation with the climbing community and improve environmental ethics of all “backcountry” users, it is generally accepted as reasonable and fair by climbers who will thus tend to monitor their own sport and voluntarily cooperate and comply. This spirit of acceptance and cooperation is especially critical given the “backcountry” nature of climbing activity and the relatively small number of Refuge staff usually available for monitoring activities in climbing areas.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Commercial Scuba Instruction

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Commercial scuba instruction is an existing, secondary recreational use occurring on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. This use occurs when scuba instructors bring a class to the Refuge. Individuals in the class are charged a fee for the course instruction, and the instructor makes a profit off of this opportunity. Though not a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use, scuba diving is supportive of underwater wildlife observation.

Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to continue this existing Refuge use by requiring Special Use Permits for instructors.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Scuba diving is allowed only on Lake Elmer Thomas.

c) When is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors may engage in scuba diving on the Refuge year-round during daylight hours only.

d) How is the use conducted?

Commercial scuba diving instructors will be required to obtain a Special Use Permit and pay a user fee to conduct their activities on the Refuge. They would be expected to follow the terms of that permit as far as location, timing, and methods allowable for the use, and other provisions necessary to protect resources. Group size will be limited to 15 individuals to reduce conflicts with fishing, a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use. Police and fire departments from nearby communities come in large groups to the Refuge to scuba dive for training purposes. They will be required to obtain a Special Use Permit, but the fee will be waived.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Scuba diving is an existing use supportive of wildlife observation, one of the six priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System, as stipulated in the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. While the primary purpose of the lakes is to provide a perennial water source for Refuge wildlife and serve as the beginnings of the watershed for many surrounding creeks, the Refuge lakes are also intended to provide a high quality recreational experience within serene surroundings. Existing and planned infrastructure developments like fishing piers, parking lots, and impoundment structures at Lake Elmer Thomas support this use. This use offers the perfect opportunity to instill an understanding and appreciation for the purpose and mission of the Refuge.

This use provides an opportunity for visitors to learn about the Refuge's natural resources. The Refuge will provide informational brochures about the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System, which will further goals of the Refuge, the Refuge System, and the Service. These activities provide a value added service to the public, allowing them to appreciate and understand the conservation value of the Refuge. This level of awareness can lead to support for the Refuge System, for wildlife conservation, and for resource management issues.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including commercial scuba diving. Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to better manage, control, and/or restrict commercial uses as necessary. To make these enforcements possible, changes to the Special Use Permit program will be made. It is anticipated that these changes will require additional time, money, or staff. To fully implement and manage the Special Use Permit program (including commercial scuba instruction), an additional 0.5 Park Ranger FTE is needed at a start-up cost of \$91,000 and an annual operating cost of \$45,000.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Changes in habitat or water and shoreline quality are not expected as a result of this activity due to the depth of water that divers generally utilize. These activities could also result in adverse effects that come from large groups congregating on the Refuge. To reduce the potential for any adverse effects and user conflicts, each permit would be evaluated individually and would only be approved and issued when minimal impacts to Refuge resources and existing wildlife-dependent recreation can be assured.

Commercial scuba diving is a short-term use on the Refuge that may result in beneficial impacts to the visitor experience through wildlife-dependent recreational use of wildlife observation and interpretation.

Cumulative Impacts:

At current levels, there are minor anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from commercial scuba diving. Adverse effects are caused by the gathering of large groups and user conflict. To mitigate safety impacts, the Refuge requires boaters to follow State regulations on boating-scuba diving interactions. The Refuge will monitor and regulate this use to ensure that group size and dive frequency are not causing resource damage or safety concerns. This use occurs in conjunction with wildlife-dependent recreational uses and adds to the available recreational opportunities on the Refuge. Therefore, it may result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that scuba diving remains a compatible use:

1. Activity is monitored to assure that all Refuge rules and regulations are followed, as outlined in the Cooperative Agreement (see Justification).
2. Scuba diving is observational only and does not include fishing using underwater techniques.
3. Scuba diving will only occur in Lake Elmer Thomas.

4. Group size will be limited to 15 individuals.
5. Permittee will comply with all Refuge regulations.
6. Harassment or feeding of wildlife is prohibited.
7. Commercial scuba diving may only occur when and where authorized by the permit. Gathering areas will be permit-specific based on maximum potential group size.
8. Permittee will not disrupt the activities of other visitors or the normal use of the Refuge.
9. The permittee will not pose a public health or safety risk.
10. The permittee is responsible for ensuring that all employees, party members, contractors, and any other persons working for the permittee and conducting activities allowed by this permit are familiar with and adhere to conditions of the permit and all Refuge regulations.
11. The permit may be terminated at any time by the Refuge due to non-compliance with stipulations of this permit or to protect the resources.
12. Permit will include a fee to support administration of the use.

Justification:

Commercial scuba diving currently occurs on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge as a secondary use that facilitates the primary wildlife-dependent recreation uses defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Essentially, this commercial use facilitates wildlife observation. According to Fish and Wildlife Service Policy (603 FW 1, Section 1.11), “there may be situations where the refuge has exceptional or unique recreational resources, such as rock climbing, that are not available nearby, off the refuge, and the use requires insignificant management resources. In such cases, we may further consider a use.” Police and fire departments from nearby communities come in large groups to the Refuge to scuba dive for training purposes. Opportunities for this type of training are limited in the area. Additionally, Lake Elmer Thomas is one of the few lakes in the local area that has clear enough water to engage in this activity. Scuba diving would only be on Lake Elmer Thomas. Users would be required to obtain a Special Use Permit. Scuba diving occurs in accordance with Cooperative Agreement #1448-0002-92-233 between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge), U.S. Army (Fort Sill Military Reservation), and the State of Oklahoma (Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation).

Regulated commercial uses as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience wildlife firsthand and develop awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources. This activity will have minimal conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Group size will be limited to 15 individuals to reduce conflicts with fishing, a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that these commercial uses, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, are compatible uses that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Environmental Education

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge is home to one of the largest and busiest Environmental Education (EE) programs in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Several existing programs and facilities offer educational opportunities for visitors of all abilities to enjoy. The program includes on-Refuge courses taught primarily at the EE Center.

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing wildlife-dependent recreational use, as well as make one change through Public Use Area Management Objective 4 of the CCP: “Within five years of CCP approval, develop the EE Center as an educational training facility and increase emphasis on EE from 6 percent to 10 percent of school contacts and

staff-led activities.” This CD re-evaluates this existing use and considers the proposed changes to and expansion of the EE program.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Most youth programs are conducted at the EE Center at Quanah Parker Lake. The EE Center buildings include a large classroom building (1,960 square feet), a small classroom building (923 square feet), an outdoor observation building (1,000 square feet), a bathroom, and a storage building that houses a women’s and men’s latrine. In accordance with the strategies outlined in the CCP, the EE Center would be remodeled to allow more functional use as classrooms. In addition, the number of environmental education courses, and the number of participants in these courses, will be limited in the Wilderness area.

c) When is the use conducted?

The EE Center is available 7 days a week for educational classes and meetings. EE programs generally last at least two hours and involve a series of contacts that culminate in personal action.

d) How is the use conducted?

EE programs are offered on an advance reservation basis only, and class sizes are limited to ensure quality programming. The EE program at the Refuge focuses on the role of personal action—the power of one—in the broader theme of resource conservation. Large and complex topics such as climate change, resource conservation, and endangered species are taught with a focus on what one individual can do to effect change. The Refuge also offers environmental education pertaining to Wilderness management and Leave No Trace in an attempt to maintain the unique opportunity for solitude that designated Wilderness offers. The EE program serves students of a wide variety of ages and interest groups, including Native American EE, university accredited workshops, and school and youth groups.

The Native American EE Program has developed a number of programs for various Plains tribes. These courses typically occur on-Refuge over weekends to allow for more in-depth learning experiences. Programs may combine art, tribal tradition, and modern environmental ethics in a format that celebrates the Native American heritage and wildlife legacy.

The Refuge also hosts a variety of workshops available for college credit in cooperation with Cameron University in Lawton, Oklahoma. Workshop subjects include biodiversity, Wichita Mountains biome, prairie ecology, elk, eagles, global change, migratory birds, and environmental ethics. All Refuge EE workshops through Cameron University remain in high demand, filled to capacity with enrolled students and a waiting list of students eager to fill any cancelled slots. The workshops use activities, research, personal introduction to the environment, and journaling sessions to involve participants in current environmental issues.

The youth component of the Refuge EE program maintains the largest number of participants, averaging 8,000 students per year. This program involves staff-conducted teaching of students onsite about Refuge resources and management programs. Youth programs consist primarily of public school classes from the surrounding region, although

home schools, scout troops, youth groups, parochial schools, and other entities also benefit from the programs. Once per year, the Refuge offers a week long sleepover camp called Nature Quest to offer extensive EE opportunities to school-aged children. Through the management outlined in the CCP, the Refuge intends to correlate EE classes to the Oklahoma State Curriculum.

In addition, the Refuge plans to host teacher workshops conducted by on-site EE staff. These workshops include an orientation, information session, and resource activities that provide area teachers with resources and tools necessary for teaching students about Refuge resources and management programs.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Through a learning process that employs nature as teacher, students gain an appreciation of natural systems and an awareness of environmental issues, and they learn the importance of a healthy environment to humans as well as wildlife. Students apply the knowledge to their daily lives and make changes based on that knowledge. Staff-conducted teaching prepares students to participate in environmental and social decision making to sustain natural and cultural resources. A variety of workshops give children opportunities to learn about and gain a deep appreciation for the natural world while creatively expressing their experiences through a variety of artistic media.

College level students learn to examine human biases and value judgments as they apply to wildlife, habitat, and consumptive uses of natural resources. Native American EE programs are designed to give students a “sense of the sacred” in the Native American relationship with the natural world while also instilling awareness and appreciation of environmental issues. Teacher workshops enhance appreciation of the Refuge’s role in the National Wildlife Refuge System, increase support for the preservation of natural diversity of flora and fauna on Refuge lands, and create an educated constituency supporting refuges and biodiversity preservation. Ultimately, the EE program is a cost-effective way to educate Refuge visitors and build public awareness while providing individuals with a high quality Refuge experience.

Availability of Resources:

About six percent (9,300) of the contacts made by Visitor Services staff are considered environmental education (USFWS 2009) and are generally comprised of college classes and alternative education classes. Therefore, the Refuge currently funds three full-time environmental educators and receives volunteered services equivalent to an additional three staff people. The existing staff is insufficient to provide the level of use anticipated for the EE Program in the CCP (an increase to 10 percent of contacts). Therefore, the CCP proposes that the Refuge add an additional Environmental Education Specialist to further enhance class offerings and meet this need. The Refuge also plans to enhance the EE Center in order to better serve the program, as outlined in the CCP, but the existing structure serves as the land base for this use. The Refuge partners with its Friends group to provide transportation assistance for students when needed, and the Refuge has also partnered with the City of Lawton School District.

Ultimately, additions and enhancements to the EE program will be considered through Projects 23d and 25c of the CCP, which aim to improve environmental education and education-related facilities. The Refuge proposes an estimated additional budget of \$234,000 in start-up cost and an

annual operating cost of \$106,800 per year to staff and supply the expanded program. The start-up costs for EE building upgrades are estimated at \$600,000 with an annual maintenance and upgrade budget of \$25,000. All other public use facility improvements proposed in the CCP will also benefit the EE program.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

The overall impacts to Refuge resources resulting from the EE program will be minimal due to the emphasis on courses occurring on-Refuge at the EE Center. The proposed enhancements to the EE Center will not increase the development footprint of the Refuge, as the current facilities are already in existence. There may be some minimal disturbance to wildlife resulting from large groups of students visiting the Refuge and/or school bus traffic bringing students to the Refuge, but the level of disturbance is unlikely to interfere with wildlife behavior and movements as EE makes up only 6-10 percent of Visitor Service contacts (USFWS 2009). In addition, school groups that travel among trails near the EE Center may cause trampling, erosion, and plant damage, thus resulting in habitat degradation. Due to the level of the use and facilitation of the program by Refuge staff, these impacts are likely to be minimal and short-term, occurring only in close proximity to the EE Center. Offering these activities does not alter the Refuge's ability to meet habitat goals and helps support several of the primary objectives of the Refuge.

Implementation of the EE program will ultimately continue to provide a benefit to local residents by developing a higher level of environmental knowledge and awareness among students. In addition, the program will provide long-term benefits for the Refuge itself by promoting environmental stewardship in students.

Cumulative Impacts:

It is unlikely that the EE program will incrementally add to resource impacts when combined with all past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects. Beneficial cumulative impacts may occur, however, through the spread of an environmental stewardship philosophy resulting in students who partake in the EE Program. Ultimately, this may benefit the overall mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System by fostering knowledge of the Service as well as environmental awareness and natural resource conservation.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that EE remains a compatible use:

1. Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for EE purposes and charge a fee or tuition for their services are required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge. This requirement ensures that private businesses are not unfairly making a profit from public lands and provides a mechanism for the Refuge to regulate where and when commercial activities occur.
2. EE will only take place when and where the Refuge approves the use. All activities are to occur under the guidance of a Refuge staff member to assure minimal disturbance to wildlife, minimal vegetation damage, and minimal user conflict between other public uses.

Justification:

As defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, wildlife-dependent recreational uses may be authorized on a refuge when they are compatible and not inconsistent with public safety. Environmental education is included as one of these six activities, which are to receive enhanced and priority consideration in Refuge planning and management. Interactive environmental education as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will increase the public's awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that environmental education, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2027

References Cited:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2009. Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Unpublished Data.

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Fishing

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates fishing, which is an existing wildlife-dependent recreational use occurring on the 12 lakes on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing wildlife-dependent recreational use through Refuge-Wide Water Resources Objective 1 in the CCP: “Throughout the life of the CCP, manage water resources first and foremost for megafauna and secondarily for fisheries, waterbirds, migratory waterfowl, and shorebird species.” In addition, the CCP states that the Refuge will manage fishing to allow for increased opportunities and improved experiences (Public Use Area Management Objective 1).

b) Where is the use conducted?

Fishing is allowed on all bodies of water located in the Public use Area, but primarily occurs on the following twelve lakes. These areas are illustrated in the Public Use Opportunities map in the CCP. The 12 lakes total 500 acres and include:

- Jed Johnsons Lake (boat ramp)
- Rush Lake (boat ramp)
- Quanah Parker Lake (accessible fishing pier)
- Lake Elmer Thomas (two accessible piers, double-land boat ramp, floating boat dock, artificial fish structures)
- French Lake (boat launch area)
- Lost Lake
- Caddo Lake
- Burford Lake
- Osage Lake
- Treasure Lake
- Post Oak Lake
- Crater Lake

Lake Elmer Thomas is located on the boundary between Fort Sill Military Reservation and the Refuge and is managed cooperatively. The Refuge portion of the lake features two fishing piers, a double-lane boat ramp with floating boat dock, and multiple artificial fish structures.

c) When is the use conducted?

Fishing areas are open 24 hours a day year-round. Night fishing is allowed.

d) How is the use conducted?

The Refuge provides ample fishing opportunities for bank and boat anglers. Visitors may participate in pole and line or rod and reel fishing only. Largemouth bass, sunfish, crappie, and channel catfish are commonly caught. Only an Oklahoma State fishing license is required to fish on the Refuge. Wading is permitted when fishing, and, thus, fishermen may use tube type floaters, life jackets, or buoyant vests. Obtaining any type of bait from Refuge lands or waters is prohibited, as is taking of frogs and turtles. Mercury contamination has been found in Refuge lakes, and signs are posted warning anglers about mercury levels in largemouth bass.

Through the CCP, the Refuge intends to increase efforts to prevent littering, alcohol consumption, and enforcing fishing licensing and rules and restrictions through law enforcement of fishing activities (Public Use Area Management Objective 1). These preventative efforts may include increased education, law enforcement, signage, and trash or recycling facilities. Through Public Use Area Management Objective 1, the Refuge also proposes to add a youth fishing day clinic geared towards environmental education. In addition, the CCP proposes that the Refuge construct additional fishing piers, increase

maintenance of existing facilities, and harden existing boat ramps in order to protect natural resources and provide accessible fishing opportunities.

Stocking of resident fish species to enhance sport fishing opportunities occurs in cooperation with the ODWC. Stocking is no longer conducted on an annual basis but on a limited and sporadic basis as funds and fish are available. Through the CCP's Refuge-Wide Water Resources Objective 1 and Public Use Area Management Objective 1, the Refuge proposes to continue stocking fish periodically in the public use lakes to enhance sport fishing opportunities in cooperation with ODWC.

Fishing occurs primarily from the bank or from impoundment structures. Hand-powered boats are permitted on Jed Johnson, Rush, Quanah Parker, and French Lakes. Electric trolling motors are permitted on boats of 14 feet or less on the same four lakes. Boats of all sizes and motor types are permitted on Lake Elmer Thomas, but a "no wake" speed limit is enforced lake-wide. Float fishing tubes are allowed on all lakes within the Public Use Area. Accessible fishing piers are located at the Environmental Education Center on Quanah Parker Lake and at Lake Elmer Thomas. Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to add three new accessible fishing piers: one each at Quanah Parker, Jed Johnson, and Crater Lakes (Refuge-Wide Public Use Facilities Objective 1 and Public Use Area Management Objective 1). Such improvements will be focused in the high and medium density use zones to relieve pressure in the low density use zone. Unpaved boat ramps are located at French, Quanah Parker, and Jed Johnson Lakes, and paved boat ramps are located at Lake Elmer Thomas and Rush Lake. This use of boats, however, is a secondary supportive use evaluated in a separate CD.

Commercial fishing tournaments are addressed in an additional Compatibility Determination. Individuals or organizations that sponsor fishing tournaments are required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge. This requirement ensures that private businesses are not unfairly making a profit from public lands and provides a mechanism for the Refuge to regulate where and when commercial activities occur.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Fishing is one of the six priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System, as stipulated in the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. ODWC determines State fishing regulations and is the primary law enforcement agency for State fishing areas. The Refuge offers the unique opportunity to fish in undeveloped surroundings in a safe, family-friendly location. While the primary purpose of the lakes is to provide a perennial water source for Refuge wildlife and serve as the beginnings of the watershed for many surrounding creeks, the Refuge lakes are also intended to provide a quality family fishing experience within serene surroundings. Existing and planned infrastructure developments like fishing piers, parking lots, and impoundment structures support the use. In addition, many visitors use the rocky lake shore habitat to bank fish. This use offers the perfect opportunity to introduce beginning anglers to the sport of fishing, to teach catch and release techniques and Leave No Trace user ethics, and to instill an understanding and appreciation for the purpose and mission of the Refuge.

Availability of Resources:

Staff time would be required to administer and manage this activity. Expenses associated with management and monitoring of fishing activities include fuel use, maintenance costs to Refuge

vehicles, inspection and maintenance of associated facilities, education efforts, visitor contacts, and sign posting. Ultimately, the additions and enhancements to the fishing program will be considered through Projects 23a and 25d of the CCP, which aim to improve wildlife-dependent recreation activities and enhance or improve public use facilities. The Refuge is proposing a start-up budget of \$91,000 and annual operating budget of \$57,400 to improve management of the fishing program, which includes the addition of a new GS-9 Law Enforcement Officer. Additional fishing infrastructure developments are estimated at a start-up cost of \$225,000 and an annual maintenance budget of \$9,500.

Refuge staff also plans to update the existing Fisheries Management Plan (2002) by 2017, as stated in Chapter 5 of the CCP. The step-down planning process will include an initial review period to determine if the activity is occurring at appropriate locations and levels as well as if a quality recreational experience is being provided. Then, the Refuge will determine what, if any, changes to make to the fishing program. This process will require input from the Refuge Manager, Biology staff, and Visitor Services staff, as well as staff time and money.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Fishing poses no foreseeable detrimental environmental impacts to the Refuge, its habitats, or wildlife species. Fishing activities may cause temporary disturbance to habitat through trampling of bank vegetation leading to soil erosion, with this erosion of shoreline leading to sedimentation of waterbodies, and littering near shores resulting in pollution. The Refuge, however, proposes to add increased signage, trash facilities, education, and law enforcement to deter visitors from causing damage to these habitats. Nevertheless, these short-term adverse impacts to habitat can also lead to similar short-term disturbances to waterfowl and wildlife. Human presence may disturb wildlife, causing them to move to more remote parts of the Refuge.

The fishing program requires occasional draw-downs to be conducted to control aquatic invasive species, to manage fisheries, and to improve recreational fishing opportunities. These draw-downs also have the potential to provide habitat for waterbirds and migratory waterfowl and shorebird species. Harvest of fish may lead to effects to local fisheries, but anglers are required to follow State regulations on fishing. Therefore, effects would likely only be negligible, and opportunities for over-harvest would be minimized. In addition, construction of additional fishing piers may result in temporary disturbance to water resources, but these actions will be addressed in a step-down management plan to ensure that locations and methods minimize potential adverse environmental impacts.

Alternatively, fishing may result in long-term beneficial impacts to the human environment. This use may increase the viewers' understanding and appreciation of fish and wildlife, their habitat needs, and the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System in their conservation. The additional fishing facilities will offer increased opportunities for the public to participate in this wildlife-dependent recreational activity, thereby helping the Refuge to accomplish some of its primary objectives.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from fishing. Ultimately, this activity will add to public use opportunities on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment. The wide variety of public use

opportunities available on the Refuge will increase public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. This will benefit the Service's overall mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that fishing remains a compatible use:

1. Temporary access restrictions may be used to protect sensitive resources from harassment.
2. Personal water craft such as Jet Skis, Sea-Doos, Wave-Runners, etc. are prohibited.
3. Obtaining any type of bait from Refuge lands or harvesting frogs and turtles is prohibited.
4. The Refuge will limit and control Refuge access through enforcement of Refuge regulations, signage, and education of the public as to the purpose of the Refuge and responsibilities of visitors.
5. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited on the Refuge.
6. Swimming is prohibited on the Refuge.
7. No person may use more than five poles or rods while fishing.
8. State daily creel limits apply.
9. Fishing in the Special Use Area of the Refuge is prohibited. This action assures that the primary bald eagle wintering grounds and core black-capped vireo breeding and nesting colony are not disturbed.

Justification:

As defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, wildlife-dependent recreational uses may be authorized on a refuge when they are compatible and not inconsistent with public safety. Fishing is included as one of these six activities, which are to receive enhanced and priority consideration in Refuge planning and management. Regulated fishing as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience wildlife firsthand while also developing an understanding of the Refuge's role in fish and wildlife conservation through the National Wildlife Refuge System. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological

resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that fishing, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 15-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2027

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Grazing

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Private livestock (cattle) grazing through Special Use Permits currently occurs on 430 acres of the Refuge. All grazed areas fall outside the big game boundary fence on the north and west boundaries of the Refuge. Grazing was permitted in those areas to ensure that they do not become under-utilized, thereby discouraging woody plants from invading. This use has occurred for at least the past 60 years. Five permittees are allowed to graze on those lands, not to exceed 216 Animal Unit Months (AUMs). AUMs refer to the amount of forage needed to sustain an animal for one month.

Through Refuge-wide Objective 10 (Permitted Grazing) of the CCP, the Refuge proposes to phase out permitted grazing program once boundary fences are moved to the true Refuge boundary.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Permitted livestock grazing occurs on 430 acres outside the big game boundary fence on the north and west boundaries of the Refuge.

c) When is the use conducted?

Permittees are allowed to regulate their own grazing program, but they may not exceed AUMs specified for each tract.

d) How is the use conducted?

All grazing permits specify the maximum number AUMs of grazing allowed, but permittees are otherwise allowed to regulate their own grazing program.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The Refuge has a need to maintain this property until boundary fences can be moved to the true Refuge boundaries. If grazers were excluded, encroachment from woody vegetation would quickly become an issue on these tracts because they are not included in prescribed burn units of the Refuge.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently allows permitted grazing on Refuge lands outside of the Refuge boundary fence. Existing staff is assigned to manage this use by annually evaluating the range conditions and reviewing and issuing grazing permits. Through the CCP, however, the Refuge proposes to move the Refuge boundary fence to its true boundary to allow for more acreage for Refuge wildlife and to more effectively and efficiently manage its lands. Grazing permits will be phased out after the Refuge fence is moved to the actual Refuge boundary. Through Project 26c of the CCP, the Refuge aims to manage grazing utilization on the Refuge in a way that minimizes the opportunity for undergrazing or overgrazing. Reconstructing the Refuge boundary fence will be prioritized through the implementation of the CCP, which will allow the peripheral areas currently subject to grazing permits to be managed consistent with other Refuge lands. The cost of moving the eight miles of Refuge fence to the actual Refuge boundary is approximately \$850,000. After the fence is moved and grazing permits are phased out, the costs and time required for monitoring and administering the grazing permits will be eliminated.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

All leases specify the maximum number of AUMs of grazing allowed. The Refuge staff's ability to closely monitor compliance is limited, but there is no indication of habitat abuse. Encroachment of woody vegetation (oak, cedar, and mesquite) occurs on some of these tracts because they are not included in prescribed burn units of the Refuge. Elimination of grazing permits in the peripheral areas will render some long-term wildlife resource benefits, as these areas will increase acreages available for other Refuge management purposes to benefit Refuge grazers and other wildlife, and

it would enhance fire management opportunities in these areas to benefit habitat. Some minor adverse long-term economic impacts would result to a few local ranchers who will lose grazing privileges on those lands currently permitted for grazing.

Cumulative Impacts:

Grazing, primarily by bison, longhorns, and elk, is managed throughout the Refuge to maintain the health and natural conditions of the Refuge grasslands. In addition, the Refuge permits livestock grazing on 430 acres of peripheral Refuge lands outside the Refuge big-game (boundary) fence for grassland management. Grazing is a part of this area's natural history needed to maintain natural grasslands conditions. There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from grazing if it is properly managed according to carrying capacity. The proposed phasing out of grazing on the peripheral Refuge lands will likely result in positive cumulative impacts associated with rendering those lands available for wildlife management purposes.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that grazing remains a compatible use:

1. Staff efforts to monitor grazing impacts will be increased to assure a better evaluation.
2. Hunting and trapping on these lands are prohibited in the leases.
3. Actual Refuge boundaries are posted conspicuously.
4. No water developments, fences, pens, or other agricultural and/or residential building or facilities may be built by permittees on Refuge lands.
5. Use of any pesticide on Refuge lands is prohibited unless approved by the Refuge Manager.
6. Livestock grazing permits will be phased out after the Refuge boundary fence is relocated to the actual Refuge boundary.

Justification:

Grazing occurs on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge as a management activity that facilitates vegetation management through a natural ecological process. Permitted grazing occurs on 430 acres of the Refuge that fall outside of the boundary fence. Permitted grazing as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide maintenance

on these tracts until the Refuge is able to relocate the boundary fence to its proper boundary. This activity will not conflict with any of the other Refuge habitat and wildlife management activities as long as the boundary fence remains in its current location. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that grazing, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, is a compatible use that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Hiking

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Hiking provides the means of access to many habitats across the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge where visitors may participate in priority wildlife-dependent recreation activities. In this manner, hiking is an existing secondary recreational use occurring on the Refuge primarily in support of wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation.

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing Refuge use through Public Use Area Management Objective 9 of the CCP: “Within 10 years of CCP approval, manage hiking opportunities to allow for better experiences by providing 3.5 miles of accessible trail and maintaining the existing 17.7 miles of trail.” In addition, the Refuge also proposes to

continue this use in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area through Wilderness Area Management Objective 6: “Within six years of CCP approval, manage and improve hiking opportunities to provide for better experiences and fewer Wilderness impacts by increasing trail maintenance on 3.5 miles of trail.”

b) Where is the use conducted?

The Refuge offers hiking opportunities on 14 trails in the Public Use Area and two trails in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area, totaling approximately 17.7 miles in length. Trails range in length from less than 0.5 miles to 6 miles, and in difficulty from the accessible interpretive trail at Quanah Parker Lake to the 600-foot elevation climb up Elk Mountain trail. The most heavily used trails on the Refuge are the Elk Mountain and Charons Gardens trails, both of which access the Charons Garden Wilderness. The Dog Run Hollow Trail System encompasses four distinct loops (Bison, Longhorn, Elk, and Kite Trails) and was designated a National Recreation Trail in 1981. In addition, the Refuge has a one-mile trail up Little Baldy, a one-mile trail that links the Environmental Education Center and Doris Campground, and a one-mile hike to the Jed Johnson tower, each of which offers easy, family-friendly walks.

Through the plan, the Refuge proposes to develop a new multi-purpose trail between the Refuge Visitor Center and improve the existing trail connecting the EE Center with Doris Campground. This is meant to create a safe, efficient, and accessible link between the three most heavily used visitor facilities that would supplant the need to drive. The Refuge also plans to provide trail linkages between the Refuge and the Lake Elmer Thomas Recreation Area through construction of new segments or reconstruction of old segments.

c) When is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors are allowed access for hiking during daylight hours, with the exception of camping in both Doris Campground and throughout the Charons Garden Wilderness backcountry. The only restrictions to hiking occur during fall and winter permit hunts, when foot travel and vehicle travel on secondary roads is restricted.

d) How is the use conducted?

Currently, visitors may participate in hiking opportunities by biking or driving to trailheads upon entering the Refuge. The Visitor Center contains information on all available hiking trails. All trails are in need of routine maintenance, including brushing, removing downed trees, and minor ditching.

The CCP, however, proposes a number of strategies that change the current hiking opportunities on the Refuge. Specifically in relation to the compatibility of hiking, the Refuge proposes to require that all hikers register on site at trailheads. This registration process would allow the Refuge to monitor use patterns (such as the type of use, area of use, group size, etc.) and public safety. The Refuge also proposes to promote the Leave No Trace program by distributing brochures and signs, and by increasing the presence of Trail Rangers.

In addition to the strategies here, the Refuge intends to maintain the existing volume of hiking but redistribute pressure to developed areas (the east side of the Refuge) outside of the Charons Garden Wilderness in order to maintain the character of the existing

Wilderness. Group size in the developed areas of the highest use could exceed 30 people without a Special Use Permit (SUP), group size in areas of medium use could number up to 30 people without a SUP, and group size in the low density of use Wilderness area could number up to 15 people without a SUP. For more information regarding this change in management, please refer to the CCP and the Public Use Density Zones map in the CCP.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Hiking occurs on the Refuge in support of priority wildlife-dependent recreation uses, especially wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation. In fact, hiking enhances many of these opportunities by giving the hiker a better chance to view and interact with wildlife up-close. The 17.7 miles of trails across the Refuge offer the visitor ample opportunity to experience a variety of habitats and wildlife species.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including hiking. All trails are in need of improved signage, additional drainage structures, and trail rehabilitation to reduce trail braiding and eliminate paths where visitors have wandered off trail. In addition, administering this use requires staff to provide visitors with information on trails both at the Visitor Center and through the Trail Ranger system. These tasks are typically performed by the current Youth Conservation Corps enrollees, Visitor Services staff, and Maintenance staff.

Enhancements and additions to the hiking program would be considered through Projects 24a and 25e of the CCP. Through Project 24a, the Refuge aims to manage compatible supportive recreation activities on the Refuge in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resource management activities. Project 25e aims to maintain and improve public use facilities, such as increasing trail maintenance and adding new trails. The Refuge proposes a budget of \$275,500 for hiking and bicycling program improvements, including an additional 0.5 of a GS-9 Law Enforcement Officer FTE and 0.25 of a GS-9 Park Ranger FTE, and \$2.15 million in start-up costs and \$50,000 in annual operating costs to improve the facilities that assist supportive recreation, including hiking.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Hiking currently occurs primarily along designated trails, though some social trails have been developed where visitors have wandered off trail; this concentrated use results in soil compaction, erosion, and trampling of vegetation. To a limited extent, erosion on hiking trails has the potential to impact water quality by contributing to erosion, suspended sediment, turbidity, and sedimentation. In addition, hiking may have direct impacts on wildlife due to disturbance; however, it is presumed that wildlife have likely become accustomed to humans in areas where existing trails occur. Overall, these resource impacts are expected to be minor.

Through the CCP, however, the Refuge proposes to limit hiking group size on trails occurring in the Charons Garden Wilderness, which could reduce impacts on vegetation, soils, and water quality, in Wilderness. This action may simultaneously increase those adverse impacts in the medium and high density use areas at the eastern side of the Refuge (where group size will not be limited). This change in stipulations regarding hiking is planned to reduce resource impacts in

Wilderness. In addition, this action is intended to maintain or increase the Charons Garden Wilderness Area's overall wilderness character. Lands must have opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation in order to be eligible for Wilderness designation, and these management actions are expected to result in direct beneficial impacts on these opportunities while still providing areas for large groups to enjoy the Refuge experience elsewhere.

At the same time, this shift in use may result in beneficial impacts on public safety, as it will decrease the chance of Search and Rescue operations in hard-to-access Wilderness. Currently, most of these operations occur within Charons Garden, but the Refuge hopes that the redistribution of use will reduce overall travel in the Wilderness, thereby reducing the number of lost or injured hikers.

Hiking may result in the presence of litter, human waste, and may increase the risk of human-started wildfires. The Refuge, however, educates the public on these issues through brochures, literature, and conversations. Therefore, the risk of these illegal activities is low. Hiking may also result in long-term beneficial impacts to the visitor experience and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. This use may increase the viewers' understanding and appreciation of wildlife and their habitat needs, as well as the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System in resource conservation. Hiking is supportive of all six of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses allowed on the Refuge, which would serve to increase public awareness of the Refuge and conservation issues.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from hiking. Hiking occurs in conjunction with wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation, each of which will ultimately result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

- Use is Not Compatible
- Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that hiking remains a compatible use:

1. The Refuge may regulate times, areas, and conditions for hiking. During fall and winter permit hunts, the Refuge prohibits foot and vehicle travel on trails and secondary roads. This could also include temporary closure of trails seasonally to protect resource values such as nest locations and den sites.

2. The Refuge prohibits night access to the entire Refuge with the exception of Doris Campground, main roads, and night fishing.
3. The Refuge will maintain established trails, as well as block off and rehabilitate other trails to encourage use on established lanes of travel.
4. Hikers will be required to register at trail heads prior to traversing hikes.
5. Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for hiking and charge a fee or tuition for their service will continue to be required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge. This requirement ensures that private businesses are not unfairly making a profit from public lands and provides a mechanism for the Refuge to regulate where and when commercial activities occur.
6. Group size will be restricted to 15 people or less in Wilderness. In addition, group size in designated high use portions of the Public Use Area may exceed 30 people without a Special Use Permit, whereas a permit will be required for groups of 30 people or more in the areas of medium use.

Justification:

Hiking occurs on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge as a secondary use that facilitates the primary wildlife-dependent recreation uses defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Essentially, hiking facilitates all six of these activities, which include hunting, fishing, environmental education, interpretation, wildlife observation, and photography. Regulated hiking as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience wildlife firsthand and develop awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish, wildlife, and wilderness resources. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that hiking, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, is a compatible use that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Holy City

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. On October 23, 1970, Public Law 91-504 established two units of Wilderness areas within the Refuge.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates the management or permitted occupancy and use of a 65-acre site within the Refuge known as the Holy City of the Wichitas (Holy City). Under the proposed use, the Refuge would permit the continued occupancy of the site by an existing chapel, buildings and structures generally designed to resemble Jerusalem or the Holy Land during the time of Christ, and a 23-foot marble statue of Christ. The site is also occupied by a house for the caretaker, a gift shop, restrooms, a water tank, and a parking lot. The Refuge proposes to permit the Wallock Foundation, a non-profit entity, to continue to manage and operate the Holy City for visitation, similar to a visitor center and

interpretive site, as well as to conduct the Easter Sunrise Service and Pageant. The Refuge proposes to continue renewal of five-year permits authorizing use of the Holy City, subject to conditions needed to ensure compatibility of the use, throughout the life of the CCP. The Refuge will continue to monitor the Holy City operations to ensure this use remains compatible with Refuge purposes. If adverse cumulative impacts result from the permitted use of this site, additional permit conditions will be required to make the use compatible or the use will be discontinued.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Holy City is located in the eastern part of the Refuge, within the Public Use Area, approximately one mile east of Rush Lake. It is situated on a 65-acre site consisting of 10 acres occupied by permanent buildings, a parking area, and a statue scattered amongst the Refuge's mixed-grass prairie, oak woodlands, and minor rock outcroppings.

c) When is the use conducted?

Visitors come to Holy City year-round, but the Special Use Permits issued to the Wallock Foundation in the past have encompassed a 90-day exclusive use permit each year primarily for the foundation's Easter Pageant. These 90 days include the 60 days prior to Easter and the 30 days following Easter. The newly proposed management would continue the previous management and permitting.

d) How is the use conducted?

The Holy City is managed by the Wallock Foundation for public visitation and interpretation subject to a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge. Numerous local volunteers participate in performing the Easter Pageant show each year. The Refuge would continue the current level of interpretation opportunities at Holy City through handouts provided by the Wallock Foundation and answering inquiries at the Visitor Center. The Refuge would also work with the Wallock Foundation to offer increased interpretation of the Refuge's natural resources for Holy City visitors. The Foundation is responsible for the maintenance and liability of the buildings within the Holy City. The Wallock Foundation hosts a caretaker on the premises year-round to assist with site visitation and maintenance.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The original Easter Pageant started in Medicine Park, just east of the Refuge, in 1926 by Reverend Anthony Wallock. As the audience became too large for Medicine Park, the Reverend heard of the Wichita Mountains site and collaborated with the Lawton Chamber of Commerce and the State Works Progress Administration (WPA) Administrator to pursue construction on the Federal land. President Franklin D. Roosevelt permitted use of the present location for the Holy City in the Refuge and authorized WPA to construct it. The WPA completed construction in 1934, and the first Pageant was conducted on the Refuge in 1935. After construction ceased, the WPA was released from responsibility of the site and the Department of Agriculture issued a special use permit to the Wallock Foundation for continued use of the Holy City. The Special Use Permit has been renewed for varying time frames since then. Most recently, the Service has issued five-year permits to the Wallock Foundation for administration of the Holy City. The Easter

Pageant has historically drawn in crowds of 5,000 to 10,000 people each year. Overall visitation of the Holy City is over 350,000 people per year.

Given the history, tradition, and strong attachment Oklahoma residents have for this activity, the Holy City site and Easter Pageant activities have continued as an important part of the cultural heritage of the area. The Wallock Foundation seeks to continue to use the Holy City because of the existing facilities and their local historical and cultural significance. In light of today's environmental standards and passage of several laws governing the Refuge System since 1935, it is unlikely that this activity would be considered appropriate on a National Wildlife Refuge today; however, the authorization to use the present site on the Refuge was granted by a U.S. president, and a commitment was made to allow the current uses when the WPA completed construction of the site and structures in the 1930s.

Availability of Resources:

As existing Refuge resources are adequate to properly and safely administer this use, no additional resources from the Refuge would be necessary to oversee and permit activities at Holy City. The Wallock Foundation would continue to be responsible for administering use at the site and maintaining the existing facilities under the terms of a Special Use Permit, as well as publication of any interpretive materials used to facilitate the use. The Refuge would also make interpretive materials available for public use and distribution at the Holy City.

Only a limited amount of Refuge personnel time and funds are needed to oversee the use of the Holy City. A minor amount of refuge management and biological staff time is needed to review and renew the Refuge Special Use Permit every five years. During most of the year, only a minor amount of Refuge staff time and funding is needed for monitoring compliance and enforcing Refuge regulations and permit stipulations. Easter Pageant activities involve many participants and draw heavy crowds, which demands more substantial involvement of Refuge personnel, mostly for law enforcement activities. Overall, the Refuge expends approximately 0.3 full-time equivalents (FTEs) of personnel time per year toward managing uses associated with the Holy City.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Continued occupancy of the Holy City site by facilities and heavy public uses and maintenance activities associated the site would continue to have minor to moderate long-term impacts on terrestrial wildlife resources and their habitats within and in the immediate vicinity of the site. Longhorns, bison, and other wildlife species would continue to freely roam on and near the Holy City site, except for the fenced 10 acres encompassing the core structures at the site. Temporary displacement of wildlife may occur for a few days during the weekends of the Easter Pageant show and the rehearsals due to congregations of people and vehicles. Some short-term minor or moderate levels of vegetation damage may occur at the parking areas. Power lines and poles associated with the Holy City render long-term adverse aesthetic or visual impacts.

A large prairie dog colony has been established adjacent to the Holy City and spread to the area used for parking during the Easter Pageant. Parking during the pageant renders some minor to moderate local disturbance on the prairie dogs, as cars sometimes park on the prairie dog holes. Parking also causes some short-term localized impacts on prairie vegetation and soil damage and compaction resulting from vehicle traffic and parking. Such impacts may be more significant

during wet muddy conditions. During wet weather, the Refuge may require shuttling to and from the Easter pageant to avoid impacts from rangeland parking.

The Holy City and Easter Pageant attracts over 350,000 visitors to the area each year, which renders beneficial long-term economic impacts to the local areas. The 1985 environmental assessment prepared for the Holy City estimated the visitor dollars contributed to the local economy by the Holy City to be between \$200,000 and \$400,000. This use also provides minor to moderate positive long-term benefits to Refuge interpretive program, as it attracts visitors to the Refuge and provides opportunities for visitors to be presented interpretive materials about the Refuge during their visit to the Holy City.

Cumulative Impacts:

Due to the unique nature of this action, the continued occupancy and permitted use of the Holy City by a private non-profit organization for public visitation and interpretation and the annual Easter Pageant event will not incrementally add to any resource impacts resulting from other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that uses associated with the Holy City remain a compatible use:

1. Temporary access restrictions may be used to protect sensitive resources from harassment.
2. The Refuge prohibits night access to the entire Refuge with the exception of Doris Campground, main roads, and night fishing.
3. The Refuge prohibits foot and vehicle travel on trails and secondary roads during fall and winter permit hunts.
4. Vehicle parking shall be confined to the established parking lot adjacent to Holy City proper, except that the Refuge Manager may identify and designate additional temporary parking areas in the vicinity of the site to be used only during the Easter Pageant.
5. The Refuge Manager may require shuttling from off-site parking areas when conditions warrant, such as during wet muddy conditions, to prevent adverse impacts on Refuge resources or for human safety.

6. The Holy City will be open to casual public visitation only during daylight hours. Special events during non-daylight periods, other than the Pageant and scheduled night rehearsals, shall require prior approval of the Refuge Manager.
7. Campfires shall be prohibited in the permit area unless specifically authorized by the Refuge Manager.
8. As determined by the Refuge Manager, the permittee shall provide adequate law enforcement personnel to handle traffic, parking, and crowd control and be responsible for providing fire protection.
9. All livestock to be used in the Pageants shall be tested for and/or inoculated against infectious diseases to assure they are free from same and will be treated for both internal and external parasites prior to entry into the permit area. A copy of the test results and inoculation records, along with a veterinary health certificate, on any and all animals to be brought into the permit area will be provided to the Refuge Manager within five days prior to the animals being brought onto the permit area.
10. All vehicles that have previously hauled livestock must be in a clean and dry condition before entering the permit area.
11. Within the permit area, the permittee is responsible for maintaining all buildings, roads, water, sewage, and electrical facilities in a safe condition and up to all applicable laws, codes or regulations.
12. The permittee shall keep the premises and buildings in a neat, clean, and orderly condition and shall dispose of all litter and debris at an approved disposal site(s) off the Refuge.
13. The permittee shall not build or erect any major structure or perform major improvements without receiving prior written consent of the Regional Director of the Service. Annual basic repairs and maintenance of buildings and structures within the permit area shall require the approval of the Refuge Manager.
14. No more than, but at least one caretaker/hostess and their immediate family shall reside in the residence within the bounds of the permit area.
15. The permittee will allow treatment of non-native invasive plants identified by Refuge staff and any new plantings must be approved by the Refuge Manager.

Justification:

In light of today's environmental standards and passage of several laws governing the Refuge System since 1935, it is likely that this activity would be considered inappropriate on a Federal wildlife refuge today. However, a commitment was made in the 1930s when President Franklin D. Roosevelt permitted construction and use of the Holy City at its present location within the Refuge. The Wallock Foundation's predecessor accepted responsibility for the maintenance and liability for the buildings, presumably in exchange for their continued use. Given the history, tradition, and strong attachment Oklahoma residents have for this activity, the Holy City site and Pageant have continued as an important part of the cultural heritage of the area. The Proposed Action in the CCP provides for continued renewal of five-year permit with the option of renewal in five-year increments at the Refuge Manager's discretion (not to exceed 25 years) for use of a 65-acre site, including the Holy City, for the Pageant and related activities. Although there are only

minor cumulative impacts anticipated with the preferred alternative, this issue may need to be revisited if use of the site significantly increases. Granting the five-year permit will allow for frequent reassessment of the permit terms and conditions to adjust for environmental and other effects. Because of the possible detrimental, cumulative impacts by allowing a specific site for rangeland parking, the proposed permit will not designate a specific parking area for the Pageant, as in the past. A reasonable and suitable parking site, adjacent to the Holy City, will be designated at the Refuge Manager's discretion, prior to the period of use each year.

The five-year permit with renewal options is considered the most prudent means of protecting Refuge resources, while allowing the Wallock Foundation to maintain a regionally important cultural and historical event and associated facility. In addition to its own interpretive materials and programs, the Holy City will provide interpretive materials and information about the Refuge and its wildlife resources to help foster appreciation of the Refuge and its resources and to encourage outdoor recreational uses of the Refuge, and thus facilitate other priority public uses of the Refuge.

If managed or permitted under the conditions discussed here, the proposed use would not materially interfere with or detract from the Wichita Mountains Refuge's primary purpose to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds. Although there will be some minor adverse impacts to wildlife resources and aesthetic values of the Refuge, they do not rise to the level of incompatibility.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Hunting

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates hunting, an existing wildlife-dependent recreational use on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge hosts two of Oklahoma’s most popular controlled hunts, the annual elk and deer hunts. These gun hunts for elk and white-tailed deer are conducted through a permit system each year in a program cooperatively managed by the Refuge and the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC).

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing wildlife-dependent recreational use through Refuge-Wide Public Use Goal 1 Objective 1, stating that the Refuge will continue to

manage hunts cooperatively based on population and habitat management objectives throughout the life of the CCP.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Facilitated hunts typically occur Refuge-wide, including within the Special Use Area where public use is largely prohibited with the exception of these hunts and some interpretive tours.

c) When is the use conducted?

Gun hunts are held each fall and winter (between November and January) depending on white-tailed deer and elk population levels and habitat conditions. Each hunt lasts four days, with a one-day orientation and safety meeting and three days of active hunting. Public access to the Refuge during a controlled hunt is restricted during the three days of active hunting. Overall, the use equates to 6 to 12 days of restricted public access each year.

d) How is the use conducted?

Hunts are cooperatively managed and tightly controlled by the Refuge and ODWC. Both entities facilitate the hunts. Hunters are selected by random drawing and must obtain a State-issued hunting license prior to applying for the Refuge hunt. Hunters attend a mandatory safety briefing and are assigned a hunt area with a specific access point into that hunt area. Refuge and ODWC staff shuttle hunters to access hunt areas. Hunters are required to follow all Refuge restrictions including the night-time closure.

Potential hunt-related issues such as wildlife and habitat disturbance, poaching by non-registered hunters, public safety, search and rescue operations, and conflicts between hunts and other members of the public are mitigated by the limited number of hunts offered each year and by the high level of hunt facilitation and staffing. The elk hunt is a once-in-a-lifetime hunt; once drawn, hunters may not reapply.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Hunting is one of the six priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System, as stated in the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997. There are limited public hunting opportunities in western Oklahoma, and the Refuge hunts give the community a chance to experience the Refuge's exhilarating scenery and once-in-a-lifetime elk hunt and some of the best-managed deer hunts in the country. Over the last decade, the Refuge has supported one deer hunt and at least two elk hunts per year. These hunts have provided high-quality hunting opportunities for 100 deer hunters and 180 elk hunters each year. The permit hunts are very popular, with demand far outstripping the availability.

Aside from providing the public with this unique opportunity, these permit hunts are used as a management tool to meet elk and deer population management goals. Providing the hunt creates a conflict between two priority user groups (hunters and wildlife observers) and creates a large administrative workload; for these reasons, the hunting program is limited to deer and elk, which are species that require hunting as a primary means of population management. Partnering with ODWC to provide the hunts allows the Refuge to strengthen their relationship that ultimately benefits both entities from the program's success.

Availability of Resources:

With almost 100 hunters afield during each hunt opening and three to four openings each year, the level of management places a heavy administrative burden on both the Refuge and ODWC staff. Staff time and resources are primarily spent working with ODWC to organize the hunts, facilitate the hunts during the 6 to 12 days a year that hunting is offered, and monitor the overall success of the hunts. Partnering with ODWC allows the Refuge to split their administrative burden while still managing wildlife populations. ODWC benefits from license and registration fees, and the Refuge benefits from the shared equipment and labor cost. Thus, existing Refuge resources are adequate to continue to offer these hunting opportunities on the Refuge. Funding and staffing for the hunting program will be considered through Projects 9 and 10 of the CCP, which aim to continue elk and deer hunting activities on the Refuge. Existing Refuge resources are adequate to properly and safely administer this use and no additional Refuge resources are required to oversee hunting.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Hunting has shown no assessable adverse environment impact to the Refuge, its habitats, or wildlife species because the use is limited and heavily facilitated by Refuge and ODWC staff. Refuge staff shuttles hunters to various locations to minimize any impacts from vehicle access, especially in the Special Use Area. Facilitation of the hunts allows the Refuge or ODWC staff to minimize detrimental effects to vegetation, water quality, soils, or habitat. Hunting does cause mortality and disturbance to those deer and elk that are hunted and nearby non-target species, but providing this public use ultimately provides the Refuge with a method of population management for these wildlife species in excess of their carrying capacity. Limiting access to the Refuge to approximately 100 deer hunters and 180-250 elk hunters each year, each with specific areas that they are allowed to access, minimizes disturbance.

In 2010, the deer hunts resulted in 49 percent overall success and the elk hunts resulted in an overall 66 percent success rate (USFWS 2011). This resulted in the harvest of 36 deer and 180 elk, which helps enhance the habitat conditions for the remainder of each herd. Therefore, this management provides long-term beneficial impacts to the larger deer and elk population, as well as to Refuge habitat that provides shelter and forage for these species.

Potential hunt-related issues such as wildlife and habitat disturbance, poaching by non-registered hunters, public safety, search and rescue operations, and conflicts between hunters and other members of the public are mitigated by the limited number of hunts offered each year and by the high level of hunt facilitation and staffing. For this reason, foot and vehicle traffic on secondary roads is prohibited during the hunts.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from hunting. Ultimately, this activity will add to public use opportunities on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment. The wide variety of public use opportunities available on the Refuge will increase public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. This will benefit the Service's overall mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that hunting remains a compatible use:

1. Foot and vehicle travel on secondary roads and trails in the Public Use Area would be prohibited during fall and winter permit hunts.
2. Hunters are not allowed to use private vehicles to access hunt areas.
3. Hunters are required to follow all Refuge restrictions including the night-time closure.

Justification:

As defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, wildlife-dependent recreational uses may be authorized on a refuge when they are compatible and not inconsistent with public safety. Hunting is included as one of these six activities, which are to receive enhanced and priority consideration in Refuge planning and management. Regulated hunting as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a unique chance to experience the Refuge and its wildlife firsthand while also allowing the Refuge to manage deer and elk populations. The small amount of this activity will limit conflicts with any of the other priority public uses (wildlife observation) and will not adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that hunting, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 15-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2027

References Cited:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2011. Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge website.

U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C.
<http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/oklahoma/wichitamountains/hunts.html>

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Interpretation

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates interpretation, an existing use on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Interpretation is a process that aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects by firsthand experience or illustrative media rather than simply to communicate factual information. Active interpretation consists of Ranger talks and nature walks on the Refuge or at off-Refuge events. Contacts made annually number around 60,000 or more. The Refuge proposes to continue this existing wildlife-dependent recreational use through Public Use Objective 5 in the CCP:

“Within 12 years of CCP approval, update interpretive facilities and programs to improve and increase services.”

This Compatibility Determination also addresses interpretive tours on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge led by the Friends of the Wichitas. Typically, this use involves motor coaches or buses transporting groups of individuals across the Refuge, though such tours may be conducted by bicycle or on foot as well. Tour group leaders usually present Refuge information that focuses on the natural history and current management of key refuge species (bison, elk, turkey, black-tailed prairie dog, black-capped vireo, and other species) and their habitats, public land management and stewardship, and emerging issues such as climate change and energy conservation. Both staff and Friends led interpretive tours are a wildlife-dependent recreational use, and facilitate other dependent and supportive uses.

b) Where is the use conducted?

The 24,088-acre Public Use Area is open to public access for interpretive purposes. Facilities that support interpretation include:

- Visitor Center
- Sunset Picnic Area
- Lost Lake Picnic Area
- Boulder Creek Picnic Area
- Boulder Creek Cabin
- Mount Scott Picnic Area
- Charons Garden Wilderness Trail
- Elk Mountain Trail
- Dog Run Hollow Trail System
- Lost Lake Trail
- Jed Johnson Trail and Tower
- Doris Campground
- Quanah Park Lark Trail
- Turkey Creek Prairie Dog Town

An information kiosk located at the Refuge entrance serves to orient and interpret the area for visitors. Through the CCP, the Refuge plans to upgrade existing facilities and construct new facilities, including the Jed Johnson Tower and trail, as well as create a designated driving tour with interpretive signs along an established route. In addition, the Refuge plans to construct an interpretive trail loop around the Visitor Center.

Interpretation also occurs at Holy City, where the Refuge allows the Wallock Foundation to distribute interpretive materials.

In the Special Use Area, the Association of the Friends of the Wichitas (Friends) offers interpretive bus tours that reach roughly 800 people each year. The tours occur on existing roads in the Special Use Area or sometimes occur solely in the Public Use Area.

Very little organized interpretation is conducted or offered in the Wilderness Area in an attempt to maintain the unique opportunity for solitude that Charons Garden offers.

c) When is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors are generally allowed access for interpretation in the Public Use Area during daylight hours, with the exception of Doris Campground. The only restrictions to interpretation occur during fall and winter permit hunts, when foot travel and vehicle travel on secondary roads is restricted. Most informational kiosks are accessible to visitors after normal Visitor Center hours as well. In the Special Use Area, interpretation is only offered through the Friends tours, which include 7 summer wildlife tours, 6 winter eagle tours, 15 fall elk tours, and 3 fall foliage tours. Through the CCP, the Refuge has decided to limit existing interpretive tours of the Special Use Area to no more than 80 times annually. Some Friends tours also focus on stargazing, which is an interpretive event aided by the use of optical equipment. Special Use Permits are issued to provide private individuals or groups access to the Refuge after dark to participate in stargazing interpretation.

d) How is the use conducted?

Interpretation occurs through signage, informational kiosks, brochures, exhibits, demonstrations, oral presentations, audiovisual media, and conversations with staff; however, firsthand experiences are emphasized. Interpretive topics may range from the relationship between wildlife and individuals to the history of the Refuge. Optical equipment may be used to facilitate stargazing. Stargazing programs occur as a Friends tour on the Refuge or as special events. Virtual geocaching, which is using GPS coordinates to find existing points of interest (such as a natural rock formation) rather than placing/locating a physical cache, occurs on the Refuge as long as resources are not at risk.

Interpretation is both educational and recreational in nature. Participation is voluntary in nature. Through the CCP, the Refuge intends to expand public evening and weekend interpretive programs, as well as develop a Visitor Services Plan. The Refuge uses a variety of media to offer interpretive activities to all guests visiting the Refuge. In addition, the Refuge website is updated as needed, and includes interpretive information about the Refuge and its history.

At interpretation talks and event booths, the Refuge includes interpretive materials emphasizing Wilderness management and Leave No Trace information; this is done to offer non-intrusive Wilderness interpretation without actually bringing large groups to the Wilderness areas. The Friends lead three spring wilderness hikes to provide on-site interpretation.

This activity may be facilitated through other wildlife-dependent recreation activities (hunting, fishing, environmental education, wildlife observation, and photography) or secondary supportive uses, including camping, hiking, jogging, boating, bicycling, picnicking, rock climbing, and scuba diving. Visitors can benefit from interpretation by gaining an understanding of the interrelationships between humans and animals. Each of these individual recreational uses of the Refuge is evaluated in its own Compatibility Determination.

The Friends group hosts interpretive bus tours in the Special Use Area to convey current Refuge management information and educate the public on natural history, cultural history, and recreational issues. The Friends of the Wichitas (Friends) also charge \$5.00 per person to defray costs to the Refuge.

Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for the purpose of interpretation and charge a fee or tuition for their service are considered to be involved in commercial interpretation and are required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The Refuge is home to one of the largest and busiest interpretation and outreach programs in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Over 150,000 people visit the Refuge's Visitor Center each year, where most experience a passive form of interpretation provided by the many displays and exhibits. Countless contacts are also made informally by roving staff members at popular observation areas like Mt. Scott and Turkey Creek prairie dog town. In addition, over 1,000 Refuge visitors are participants in the popular interpretive bus and hiking tours staffed by the Friends of the Wichitas.

The primary goals of the Refuge's Interpretation Program are to help connect people to the land, to foster an appreciation of the resources, and to facilitate outdoor, nature-based recreation. This use has the potential to create understanding, reveal relationships, examine systems, and explore how the natural world and human activities are intertwined. An objective of interpretation is to stimulate additional interest and positive action in visitors, which can even prepare citizens to participate in environmental and social decision making emphasizing natural and cultural resource conservation. The Interpretation Program also supports and facilitates the Wildlife Observation Program by offering pertinent natural history and management information.

The interpretive bus and hiking tours offered by the Friends are very popular. Commercial interpretive tours will bring hundreds of new visitors to the Refuge each year. This provides an opportunity for the Refuge to conduct public interpretation and outreach. The Refuge will provide informational brochures about the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System, which will further goals of the Refuge, the Refuge System, and the Service. These tours provided a value added service to the public, allowing them to appreciate and understand the conservation value of the Refuge. This level of awareness can lead to support for the Refuge System, for wildlife conservation, and for resource management issues.

Availability of Resources:

Interpretive tours are cost effective, as most labor is contributed through the volunteer efforts of the Association of the Friends of the Wichitas. Visitor Services staff includes one Supervisory Park Ranger (GS-0025-12), a Park Ranger (GS-0025-5/7/9), and three Environmental Education Specialists (GS-1701-9) who are actively involved in the Interpretation Program. Through the CCP, the Refuge intends to add an additional Park Ranger in order to enhance interpretive programs. The Refuge provides periodic interpretive training for Friends members, who then coordinate and conduct pre-scheduled tours for Refuge visitors. As part of this cooperative effort, the Refuge owns and maintains one bus used for interpretive tours in the Special Use Area. To offset such costs, however, the Friends collects a \$5.00 per person fee for participation.

In relation to interpretation, the Refuge also spends time and money on the maintenance of interpretive facilities and access points. Less than 10 percent of the regulatory signs and all of the interpretive signs need replacement, according to the 2010 Wichita Mountains Visitor Services Review (Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, unpublished report). Most interpretive panels and kiosks are in good physical condition but are in need of updating with current information and the Service logo, according to the 2010 Wichita Mountains Visitor Services Review (Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, unpublished report). The Refuge has adequate staff and funding to perform these upgrades and better meet the needs of the interpretive program.

Enhancements and additions to the interpretive program will be considered through Projects 23c and 25b of the CCP. Project 23c proposes to improve management and content of the interpretive program, and Project 25b proposes to improve the interpretive infrastructure. Start-up costs are estimated at \$1.53 million with an annual operating and maintenance cost of \$10,500. Estimated figures will assist the Refuge in adequately funding both overall projects and to improve facilities and opportunities that assist all six of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses allowed on the Refuge.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Interpretive activities have the potential to impact the physical, biological, and human environment. Vehicles travelling on Refuge roads and tour buses facilitating interpretation will result in vehicular emissions that have the potential to degrade air quality. Staff- or volunteer-led interpretive tours on Refuge trails may result in some temporary disturbance to wildlife; however, with 1.5 million Refuge visitors each year, it is likely that wildlife species on the Refuge have acclimated to human presence. Groups or individuals travelling on trails may also cause soil compaction, erosion, trampling of vegetation, and production of litter or human waste. These impacts have a low potential of causing degradation of soil and water quality in lands and waterbodies near trails and interpretive facilities.

Active interpretive contacts with the public are usually less than two hours and are generally facilitated by Refuge staff or volunteers trained by Refuge staff. This gives the Refuge some level of control over the participants' behavior and potential to negatively impact resources. The Refuge also confines the use to areas where designated facilities and trails exist in an attempt to accommodate the priority wildlife-dependent recreational use while reducing the potential for resource impacts. The proposed additional wildlife observation routes and interpretive trail loop will increase the area where visitors can participate in this activity while decreasing the intensity of the environmental impacts resulting from the use. Therefore, all of these impacts are expected to be negligible to minor, site-specific, and short-term.

Restricting the size of interpretive group activities in the Wilderness Area will also allow the Refuge to better maintain the Wilderness character of that area. This action will help the Refuge increase the apparent naturalness of the Wilderness while maintaining and even enhancing opportunities for solitude or primitive and unconfined recreation.

Interpretation may also result in long-term beneficial impacts to the visitor experience and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Visitor Center facilities, publications, films, and public speeches will increase public awareness of the Refuge and conservation issues. This use may increase the viewers' understanding and appreciation of wildlife and their habitat needs as well as the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System in resource conservation. The

additional interpretive facilities will offer increased opportunities for the public to observe, understand, and appreciate wildlife while enhancing the overall Refuge System mission. Therefore, these beneficial impacts will likely remain.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from interpretation. Ultimately, this activity will add to public use opportunities on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment. The wide variety of public use opportunities available on the Refuge will increase public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. This will benefit the Service's overall mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that interpretation remains a compatible use:

1. Temporary access restrictions may be used to protect sensitive resources from harassment.
2. The Refuge prohibits night access to the entire Refuge with the exception of Doris Campground, main roads, night fishing, and occasional permitted tours.
3. The Refuge prohibits foot and vehicle travel on trails and secondary roads during fall and winter permit hunts.
4. The Refuge will limit and control Refuge access through enforcement of Refuge regulations, signage, and education of the public as to the purpose of the Refuge and responsibilities of visitors.
5. Only virtual geocaching is allowed on the Refuge; traditional geocaching and placement of human objects is prohibited.
6. Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for the purpose of interpretation and charge a fee or tuition for their service are required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge. This requirement ensures that private businesses are not unfairly making a profit from public lands and provides a mechanism for the Refuge to regulate where and when commercial activities occur.

Justification:

As defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, wildlife-dependent recreational uses may be authorized on a refuge when they are compatible and not inconsistent with public safety. Interpretation is included as one of these six activities, which are to receive enhanced and priority consideration in Refuge planning and management. Regulated interpretation as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience the Refuge in a high-quality, safe, wholesome, and enjoyable recreational experience. This will ultimately further the visitors' understanding of the refuge's role in wildlife and habitat conservation through the National Wildlife Refuge System. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that interpretation, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge. Instead, this use directly supports the purpose for which the Refuge was established by educating visitors and local clientele so they can better understand and support conservation of all wildlife and their habitats.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 15-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2027

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Job Corps

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates the continued administration and operation of the Treasure Lake Job Corps Center by the U.S. Forest Service through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Job Corps Center was established in 1965 and was originally operated by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, a predecessor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The purpose of the site was to provide disadvantaged youth an opportunity for education, vocational training, and useful work experience for the purpose of increasing their employment capability and preparing them for the responsibilities of citizenship. The Treasure Lake Job Corps Center was administered by

the Service until 2006, when administration was transferred to the Bureau of Reclamation. Most recently, on January 17, 2010, the administration and operation of the Treasure Lake Job Corps Center was transferred to the U.S. Forest Service. The CCP supports continuation of this management of the 80-acre Job Corps site by the Forest Service.

b) Where is the use conducted?

The Treasure Lake Job Corps Center is located within the Public Use Area of the Refuge, as identified in the Management Areas map in the CCP. The site encompasses approximately 80 acres near the southwest corner of the Refuge in Comanche County, Oklahoma.

c) When is the use conducted?

The Treasure Lake Job Corps site is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Thus, the Forest Service is responsible for its management year-round. The Refuge and the Forest Service will meet annually, however, to facilitate regular communication and partnership activities. As written in the MOU between the two agencies, this meeting will occur between October and December each year.

d) How is the use conducted?

The administration of the Job Corps site was transferred from the Bureau of Reclamation to the Forest Service through a Memorandum of Agreement dated January 17, 2010. An additional site-specific MOU was signed on March 16, 2010, that solidified the transfer and explained the roles and responsibilities of both the Service and the Forest Service. According to the MOU, the Service transferred a right-of-way to the land to the Forest Service. The Service maintains the responsibility to grant rights and privileges to the 80-acre tract of land, which may include roads, pipelines, power transmission lines, and utilities, provided there is no adverse impact on the Job Corps Program. At the same time, the agreement states that the Department of Labor has the authority to modify the Job Corps site by constructing new buildings, provided the new construction is submitted in advance to the Refuge Manager and is compatible.

Despite handing administration of the site to the Forest Service, the Refuge works with Treasure Lake Job Corps to give students a familiarity of the Refuge. The Refuge's Environmental Education Specialists provide part of the instruction for the orientation of new enrollees every two weeks to explain the purposes and operations of the Refuge to instill a sense of appreciation and respect for the Refuge. Through the CCP, the Refuge also plans to seek partnership opportunities with Treasure Lake Job Corps that could facilitate or increase environmental education (Administrative Area Management Objective 2). Refuge managers also meet with the Center Director and staff a few times a year to discuss and coordinate activities. Refuge law enforcement officers respond periodically to back-up and provide assistance to the Comanche County Sheriff's deputies for law enforcement and emergency response incidents.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The Center is contracted for 236 students ages 16 to 24 and teaches 11 vocational training programs. Job Corps is a no-cost education and vocational training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps youth between ages of 16 and 24 improve their quality of life through vocational and academic training (Department of the Interior

2010). The U.S. Forest Service gained administration of the Treasure Lake Job Corps and five other Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers in 2010 through the MOA with the Bureau of Reclamation. The purpose of that action was to continue to allow Center students to learn conservation and recreation-related trades and skills and to conduct beneficial activities on Center lands.

The Job Corps Civilian Conservation Program is a priority for the Forest Service, who has the experience and expertise to manage the Treasure Lake Job Corps Center. Although this is not a typical use of Refuge land, the Forest Service Job Corps Program will ultimately add to the future of natural resource conservation as students learn about both agencies' conservation missions while preparing for productive careers and fulfilling lives. Simultaneously, this action is in the spirit of the Job Training Partnership Act section 427 (a)(1) that authorizes Civilian Conservation Centers and states that Job Corps shall include:

"...Civilian Conservation Centers, located primarily in rural areas, which shall provide, in addition to other training and assistance, programs of work experience to conserve, develop, or manage public natural resources or public recreational areas; or to develop community projects in the public interest." (140 FW 3, Center Management)

Availability of Resources:

Existing Refuge resources are adequate to properly and safely administer this use, and no additional Refuge resources are required to oversee Treasure Lake Job Corps. The Forest Service is responsible for oversight of the operation of the Center, including utilities, materials, supplies, other goods or services, and administrative support, required to carry out the Center functions, activities, educational and vocational training programs. The Forest Service is also responsible for maintaining all lands and facilities at the Center in a condition that will assure the health and safety of students, employees and the visiting public. All land, buildings, structures, fixtures at the Center remain under the jurisdiction of the Refuge. The Refuge's Environmental Education Specialists, Law Enforcement officers, and Refuge Manager are already allocated to the tasks required of them through the MOU and the commitment to Treasure Lake Job Corps.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Many of the impacts of having a Job Corps Center on a national wildlife refuge are beneficial. Hundreds of construction projects, from building offices to fences to water control structures, have been completed on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge and surrounding communities since the Job Corps site was established in 1965. Students from Job Corps have been able to assist in those activities while in vocational school. Some Job Corps students regularly assist with Refuge Environmental Education programs as interns. Also, the students learn about the Refuge, the National Wildlife Refuge System, and both entities' role in resource conservation while attending Job Corps. In this manner, the presence of the site is helping spread knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of the Refuge, and, thus, providing beneficial impacts for the Refuge.

Alternatively, the presence of over 200 students residing at the Job Corps Center can also have some adverse impacts on the Refuge landscape. Students are allowed to leave the 80-acre Job Corps site during free time, and many participate in recreational activities on the Refuge during those times. Litter and graffiti painted on Refuge rocks has occurred regularly. The Charons Garden Wilderness Area's southern boundary is located immediately north of the Job Corps

Center Complex. Thus, the presence of young students has resulted in some negative impacts to the wilderness quality; it is likely that this has also affected soils, habitat, and wildlife, through compaction, trampling of vegetation, off-trail travel, and disturbance to animals. For these reasons, the Refuge participates in the orientation program by educating new Job Corps students about the Refuge and its resources. These negative impacts have decreased substantially since the Refuge began offering this training. Therefore, the impacts are expected to remain minimal as the Refuge continues its close relationship with the Forest Service in managing this site.

Cumulative Impacts:

The administration and operation of Treasure Lake Job Corps by the Forest Service will not incrementally add to any resource impacts resulting from other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that administration of Treasure Lake Job Corps by the Forest Service remains a compatible use:

1. The Forest Service may not permit the use of Treasure Lake Job Corps lands or facilities for any purpose that is inconsistent or incompatible with the functions and objectives of the Job Corps and the National Wildlife Refuge System.
2. The Refuge maintains management control of the Center's lands and buildings, as no land transfer is part of the MOU between the parties. The Forest Service retains a right-of-way to this land to administer and operate the Center.
3. Environmental education orientations will continue to be an integral part of Job Corps' enrollee instruction.
4. Any law enforcement issues arising from occasional student infractions occurring on the Refuge will be handled by Refuge law enforcement staff and the County Sheriff's deputies, as appropriate.
5. The Treasure Lake Job Corps Center operations must comply with all applicable laws that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must comply with, including the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the

Archeological Resource Protection Act of 1979, the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and the Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act of 1978.

6. The permittee will be required to allow treatment and removal of non-native invasive plants and animals identified by Refuge staff, and any new plantings must be approved by the Refuge Manager.

Justification:

The operation of the Treasure Lake Job Corps Center by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been in effect for over 40 years. Administration and operation of the Job Corps site by the Forest Service has minimal effect on the Refuge. The existence of the Job Corps Center on the Refuge has provided numerous maintenance and habitat improvement and enhancement projects. Although the operation of a Job Corps Center on a national wildlife refuge is not a typical use, it is compatible on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

References Cited:

Department of Interior. 2010. United States Departments of Interior and Agriculture Pre-acquisition and Disposal Environmental Screening Report for Federal Land Transactions Treasure Lake Job Corps, Transfer from U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to U.S. Forest Service.

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Jogging and Strenuous Walking

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Jogging and strenuous walking are existing recreational uses that occur on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Though the primary purpose of these activities is typically physical fitness, the Refuge provides a serene and natural landscape for civilians to exercise and view wildlife. In this manner, jogging and strenuous walking is a secondary use occurring primarily in support of wildlife observation.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Jogging and fitness walking are allowed on all public access roads and two dirt roads (the Mt. Scott bike trail/administrative road and the Burma administrative road) in the Public Use Area. Although these activities may occur on hiking trails throughout the Refuge, visitors typically do not run on trails.

c) When is the use conducted?

Jogging and strenuous walking may occur year-round during daylight hours only. Restrictions occur during fall and winter permit hunts, when foot travel and vehicle travel on secondary roads is restricted.

d) How is the use conducted?

Individuals who participate in these activities on the Refuge typically live in nearby communities and use the Refuge for physical fitness, while also appreciating the beauty of the Refuge and the wildlife scattered throughout. Some local civilian groups, such as the local chapter of the Volksmarchers, come to the Refuge to participate in these activities. Local schools occasionally transport small physical education classes to the Refuge to participate in these activities.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

It is likely that recreational user groups who participate in jogging and strenuous walking on the Refuge enjoy engaging in these activities on the Refuge because of the remoteness and beauty of the area. These activities facilitate two wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities (wildlife observation and interpretation) for most civilian recreational users. In this way, jogging and strenuous walking are supportive recreational uses.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including jogging and strenuous walking. The Refuge has very little involvement with this use due to the low demand for physical fitness activities. No additional Refuge resources would be necessary to oversee jogging and strenuous walking.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Jogging and strenuous walking occur only along established paved public access roads and unpaved administrative roads. This use is expected to result in negligible adverse impacts to Refuge resources, including some disturbance of wildlife. The small percentage of visitation that occurs for jogging and strenuous walking on these roadways will keep any disturbance to wildlife at a negligible level, as vehicle traffic along the same roadways is much higher than human presence associated with this use. On the other hand, this use also serves to reduce the Refuge's carbon footprint and minimize air quality impacts.

Although physical fitness is likely the primary purpose of this activity, there is an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the Refuge. Thus, jogging and strenuous walking occur in support of wildlife observation and interpretation, priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses. In this manner,

jogging and strenuous walking are an existing supportive recreational use with a beneficial impact on the human environment.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from jogging. Jogging occurs in conjunction with wildlife observation and interpretation, each of which will ultimately result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that hiking remains a compatible use:

1. The Refuge may regulate times, areas, and conditions for jogging. During fall and winter permit hunts, the Refuge prohibits foot and vehicle travel on trails and secondary roads.
2. The Refuge prohibits night access to the entire Refuge with the exception of Doris Campground, main roads, and night fishing.
3. Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for any purpose and charge a fee or tuition for their service will continue to be required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge. This requirement ensures that private businesses are not unfairly making a profit from public lands and provides a mechanism for the Refuge to regulate where and when commercial activities occur.

Justification:

Jogging and strenuous walking occur on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge as a secondary use that facilitates the primary wildlife-dependent recreation uses defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Jogging and strenuous walking along roadways as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to engage in physical fitness activities while experiencing wildlife firsthand and develop awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that recreational jogging/strenuous walking, in accordance with the stipulations

provided here, is a compatible use that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Mesonet Weather Station

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates the continued use of lands within the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge by the Oklahoma Climatological Survey (OCS) for the purpose of operating and maintaining a Mesonet weather station and repeater. This weather station is one in 120 automated stations that monitor “mesoscale” weather events, which are those that range in size from about one mile to 150 miles lasting from several minutes to several hours (University of Oklahoma 2011). These mesoscale events, such as wind gusts or heat bursts, are phenomenon that may go undetected without densely spaced weather observations (University of Oklahoma 2011). The data from all of the Mesonet

stations, including the one on the Refuge, is submitted to the Oklahoma Climatological Survey at University of Oklahoma, which then publishes the data for the public.

This activity is not a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and the Refuge issues a Special Use Permit for the use.

b) Where is the use conducted?

The Mesonet Weather Station is located inside an existing range enclosure that uses a plot of land (32 feet by 32 feet) in the northwest corner of the enclosure. The area is fenced and occurs in an open prairie range site. The legal description of the site is the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 16 in Township 03 North, Range 13 West. The site is three miles west of Medicine Park in Comanche County in the Refuge's Public Use Area.

The station consists of a 10-meter antenna tower and weather collecting instruments that are connected to a Data Collection Platform (DCP) also located within the area. The DCP transmits data that is collected every 15 minutes through a Refuge repeater located on Mt. Scott. The repeater tower is approximately 20 feet tall with a 10-15 foot antenna. The tower is solar powered with a series of batteries to store the electricity, but the site also includes a wind generator that helps maintain the batteries' charge. The Refuge uses the repeater tower for law enforcement but allows the Oklahoma Climatological Survey to use it to transmit weather data as well.



The Mesonet Weather Station located on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Photo provided by <http://www.mesonet.org>.

Access to the weather station is by vehicle, primarily on the existing Milligan Road or Highway 49. The road, however, stops approximately 100 yards from the station itself. There is not a maintained secondary road to the station site from Milligan Road. Therefore, maintenance and repair workers walk to the station site from the Milligan Road whenever possible in an effort to maintain the roadless condition of the area.

c) When is the use conducted?

The Mesonet Weather Station transmits data that is collected every five minutes. Therefore, the station is in continuous operation 24 hours per day year-round. Routine maintenance and repair of instrumentation may occur but typically require no more than one or two visits to the station site per year, except during instances when an instrument malfunctions. As stated in the Special Use Permit, OCS must notify the Refuge by phone when personnel need access to the station.

d) How is the use conducted?

Both the Mesonet Weather Station and the repeater are administered through a Special Use Permit. The antenna tower and weather collecting instruments collect data that is stored in the DCP, which transmits the data every five minutes through the repeater. The data is transmitted to a central site in Norman, Oklahoma. There, the data is compiled from all 120 Mesonet stations throughout Oklahoma. The data is distributed for public use. The station on the Refuge is owned, maintained, and operated by the OCS, which is a non-profit cooperative education and governmental organization. All maintenance and operations are conducted by the permittee.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The statewide network of Mesonets, including that on the Refuge, provide weather forecasters with more frequent and more localized information than the more typical atmospheric measurement sites (University of Oklahoma 2011). Specifically, better forecasts of excessive rainfall and real-time measurements of soil moisture conditions help improve the lead time on flood warnings (University of Oklahoma 2011). The Refuge also uses the data collected at the Mesonet Weather Station for baseline weather information to determine conditions suitable for prescribed burning on the Refuge. Future uses for collected weather data are anticipated to increase, and some potential uses (i.e., air and water quality monitoring) will require an up-to-date source that the Mesonet station on the Refuge can provide.

Availability of Resources:

There is very little Refuge staff or budgetary resources required to oversee permitting the Oklahoma Climatological Survey to maintain and operate the Mesonet weather station. The resources that are necessary to provide this use are already available within current and anticipated Refuge budgets. Staff time associated with the administration of this use is related to drafting and issuing the Special Use Permit and keeping in contact with the OCS.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

The Mesonet Weather Station and Repeater Tower both occur on existing sites where land has already been devoted to these purposes. Access to the sites has generally only occurred one to two times per year in order for the permittee to conduct basic maintenance. As such, there are very few potential impacts on Refuge resources. During these very infrequent times when access is required, there may be negligible impacts to wildlife by adding to disturbance factors. There may also be negligible impacts to soils and vegetation, as OCS individuals may have to walk across approximately 100 yards of Refuge land (non-trail) to access the site. The largest adverse impact on the Refuge from the issuance of this permit is the visual impact of the 10-meter antenna tower. The tower is visible from the road and may even draw the curiosity of Refuge visitors, tempting individuals to walk over to it. The Station is fenced in, preventing access by, and potential safety issues for, curious Refuge visitors. The tower is not fenced in, however, and its physical presence may cause short-term minor adverse impacts to public use by impacting the viewshed of the Refuge and, by default, decreasing the naturalness of the area. Minor vandalism and destruction have occurred to the tower. The Refuge is working to reinforce the tower building to deter or prevent future incidences.

Alternatively, the presence of the Mesonet Weather Station may result in long-term beneficial impacts to Refuge management and science understanding. Refuge management will be affected by continuing to provide the Refuge with accurate and up-to-date weather data to use when considering prescribed burning or integrated pest management strategies. Also, the OCS's use of data collected at the site may help move science research forward, potentially increasing Oklahoma's understanding of current weather and future climate conditions.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from this use. The data collected at this station and all of the other Mesonet Weather Stations in the State will contribute to better weather forecasting throughout all of Oklahoma. Ultimately, increased understanding of weather data and potential future conditions may help residents better prepare for severe weather events, thereby assisting residents in minimizing potential harm. Each of the 120 Mesonet Weather Stations throughout the State in combination will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

Oklahoma Climatological Survey must continue to contact the Refuge by phone when access to the station or repeater site is desired. This allows the Refuge to control the permittee's access in an effort to maintain the sites in as natural a condition as possible.

Justification:

This use has little impact to wildlife or habitat since it is primarily conducted for research purposes using existing permanent infrastructure. Maintenance is rarely required, which limits physical presence at the site. This activity will not conflict with any of the priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that continuing to issue the Special Use Permit for operation and maintenance of Mesonet Weather Station, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

References Cited:

University of Oklahoma. 2011. Oklahoma Mesonet. <http://www.mesonet.org>. Accessed 2011 Mar 16.

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Mount Baker Repeater

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. On October 23, 1970, Public Law 91-504 established two units of Wilderness areas within the Refuge.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates secondary use of a repeater building and tower on Mount Baker of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge that was originally established to serve Refuge law enforcement and fire fighting communication needs. The facilities are used by several secondary operators, including the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety, and Comanche County. Each entity has its own repeater located in a central building on Mount Baker owned by the Department of Homeland Security. This activity is not a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

b) Where is the use conducted?

The repeater building is located on the side of Mount Baker within the Special Use Area. The approximately 30-foot tall tower is located near Baker Peak on the northwest corner of the Refuge and is connected to the building by a cable that runs up the side of the mountain.

c) When is the use conducted?

The communication facilities remain on site and operate on an ongoing basis. Maintenance activities occur occasionally when needed.

d) How is the use conducted?

Operation and maintenance of the building and tower are primarily conducted by the Department of Homeland Security. Communication facilities are remotely operated. A limited amount of human activities occur at the site and is generally associated with occasional maintenance. Current and future access will be achieved by small all-terrain vehicle (ATV) or by air (helicopter) when possible.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The Baker repeater facilities on the Refuge serve the national safety interests and law enforcement needs by providing facilities needed to gather information and communicate with one another. The use also enhances the Refuge's law enforcement capabilities and firefighting services as officers carry both regular walky-talkies and 800 megahertz walky-talkies that allow them to use the Baker repeater tower for enhanced communication.

Availability of Resources:

There is very little Refuge staff or budgetary resources required to oversee operation and maintenance of the repeater building and tower, as the Department of Homeland Security manages the use. The resources that are necessary to provide and administer this use are already available within current and anticipated Refuge budgets.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Anticipated impacts on Service lands pertaining to this use are minimal. Historical access to the radio building and tower for maintenance and/or repairs has been very low (approximately once a year) in the past. Current and future access by ATVs and helicopters will have minimal impacts to the soils, vegetation, water quality, and wildlife, especially with the anticipated low frequency of disturbance. Use of this equipment may, however, result in some minor impacts to air quality due to emissions. Again, the limited amount of site access will also limit the potential impact. Presence of the tower, building, and cable result in adverse impacts to the visual resource of the Refuge, but the location of the site in the Special Use Area minimizes this impact, as the site is not within view of where most public uses occur.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from operation and maintenance of the Baker repeater building and tower.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

Access to maintenance and operation of the current equipment will continue to be by air or by ATV to help insure minimal resource disturbances of any type.

Justification:

Regulated operation and maintenance of the Baker repeater building and tower as described here will have very little impact on the physical and biological environments. This use has little impact to wildlife or habitat since access occurs so infrequently and human activities that occur onsite are very limited. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that the use of the building and tower, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Natural Resource Collection

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates natural resource collection on the Refuge occurring for tribal, educational, or cultural reasons. This use is not open to the general public. Typically, this use entails the removal of plants, cedar branches, or rocks for traditional ceremonies or educational purposes. This activity is not a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and it requires a Special Use Permit.

b) Where is the use conducted?

This use may occur anywhere in the 24,088-acre Public Use Area though specific locations and will be described in the individual Special Use Permits.

c) When is the use conducted?

Time frames for this use will vary depending on the request, and restrictions on when the use can be conducted will be described in the individual Special Use Permits. Individuals who request this use will likely be confined to collecting natural resources during daylight hours only.

d) How is the use conducted?

When an individual requests to conduct natural resource collection on the Refuge, that individual must formally request such use from the Refuge Manager. The Refuge Manager then issues the individual a Special Use Permit with specific restrictions on timing and location of the use, as well as amount of collection permissible. Permits will only be issued when the proposed natural resource collection is associated with tribal, cultural, or educational purposes.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Natural resource collection is allowed on the Refuge because it is a traditional tribal use of the area, and resource specimens may be valuable for scientific research or cultural understanding. In addition, this use supports interpretation of the area by expanding the appreciation and understanding of Refuge resources.

Availability of Resources:

There is very little Refuge staff or budgetary resources required to oversee natural resource collection. The resources that are necessary to provide and administer this use are already available within current and anticipated Refuge budgets. Staff time associated with the administration of this use is primarily related to interactions with individuals who request the use, issuance of Special Use Permits, and monitoring the impacts of the use on Refuge resources.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Historically, public participation in natural resource collection on the Refuge has been low. In 2010, only seven Special Use Permits were issued for this use. This activity mainly occurs adjacent to existing roads and trails, thereby minimizing any adverse impacts to soils, habitat, and waterbodies. The action may result in some level of disturbance to wildlife, but the very low frequency and duration of this use will not result in any measurable resource impacts. Furthermore, the relatively few resources harvested during natural resource collection will not significantly alter the many habitats scattered across the Refuge.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from natural resource collection. Ultimately, this activity will add to the diversity of public use opportunities on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

All individuals interested in natural resource collection related to tribal, educational, or cultural purposes must receive a Special Use Permit prior to actively participating in this activity. The permit will indicate when, where, and how the applicant may participate in natural resource collection.

Justification:

Regulated natural resource collection as described here will provide the visitor with a chance to experience the Refuge while participating in a traditional Refuge use that could benefit long-term scientific research. This use has little impact to wildlife or habitat since it is recreational in nature and few people participate. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that natural resource collection, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Photography

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Photography is an existing wildlife-dependent recreational use on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. This is a popular public use of the Refuge, and it includes a variety of formats (i.e., still, video, or movie). Opportunities for photography and videography mirror those for wildlife observation. The Refuge offers world-class wildlife viewing and photography with opportunities to see and photograph bison, elk, white-tailed deer, turkey, and prairie dogs, as well as a host of small mammals, birds, and reptiles. The Refuge proposes to continue this existing wildlife-dependent recreational use through Public Use Objective 3 in the CCP: “Throughout the life of the CCP, continue to allow

public use access and provide facilities that contribute to spectacular photographic opportunities for over one million visitors per year.” In addition, the Refuge intends to manage for spectacular photography opportunities in Charons Garden Wilderness Area throughout the life of the CCP by improving Wilderness conditions (Wilderness Area Objective 2).

b) Where is the use conducted?

The 24,088-acre Public Use Area is open to public access for photography opportunities via foot, bicycle, and vehicle travel. Over 50 miles of paved roads, 17.7 miles of hiking trails, and 13 miles of dirt roads facilitate a range of viewing and photography opportunities. The Refuge contains 89 parking areas, ranging from roadside pullouts to fully-developed parking lots, where visitors can use their vehicles as photography blinds. In addition, the Refuge provides two sites specifically for photography opportunities. The first is Turkey Creek prairie dog town, which has a paved pullout parking area and two interpretive signs. The second is the accessible nature trail at Quannah Parker Lake that offers waterfowl and wetland photography, four interpretive signs, and accessible restrooms. In addition, the Charons Gardens Wilderness Trail and Elk Mountain Trail are open to photography. These 2 trails (hiking access only) constitute 3.5 miles that facilitate this use.

c) When is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors are allowed access for photography during daylight hours, with the exception of Doris Campground and certain areas that provide night fishing opportunities where photography may occur as a secondary use. The only restrictions to photography occur during fall and winter permit hunts, when foot travel and vehicle travel on secondary roads is restricted.

d) How is the use conducted?

The Photography Program is currently managed in conjunction with the Wildlife Observation Program. As is the case with wildlife observation, the use can take form through a variety of different means including camping, fishing, hiking, jogging, hunting, interpretation, boating, bicycling, picnicking, rock climbing, and scuba diving. Each of these individual recreational uses of the Refuge is evaluated in its own Compatibility Determination. The Refuge is also proposing to develop online observation and photography tools and tips to aid in awareness of such opportunities.

Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for the purpose of photography and charge a fee or tuition for their service are required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The goal of the Photography Program is to offer a variety of high quality opportunities to photograph wildlife in their native habitats while minimizing potential conflict between user groups and between humans and wildlife. Visitors can benefit from photography by gaining an understanding of the interrelationships between humans and animals.

Availability of Resources:

Photography use from 2005 to 2009 is estimated at an average of 1.2 million visits per year (USFWS 2009). The Refuge uses a large portion of their staff and budget resources to facilitate wildlife observation, which goes hand-in-hand with photography opportunities. Both programs require oversight by visitor services, law enforcement, and maintenance staff. In association with these two uses, Refuge staff make visitor contacts at the Visitor Center, provide information to visitors through the Trail Ranger system, maintain and improve existing facilities, and monitor the uses. Law enforcement staff patrols roads, pullouts, and parking areas, mainly enforcing regulations regarding speed limits, illicit substance use or possession, occasional vehicle theft, and vandalism.

Continuing, enhancing, or adding to the existing photography and wildlife observation programs will be considered through Projects 23b and 25a of the CCP. Project 23b proposes to improve the management and delivery of the photography/observation program, and Project 25a proposes to improve photography and observation infrastructure. The estimated start-up cost for improved program management and infrastructure development is \$993,000, with an annual operating and maintenance cost of \$41,200. These estimated figures will assist the Refuge in adequately funding both overall projects and in improving facilities and opportunities that assist all six of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses allowed on the Refuge.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Human presence on roads and trails that facilitate viewing and photography may result in some environmental impacts to the Refuge, its habitat, and wildlife species. Vehicles travelling Refuge roads for photography purposes may result in emissions that could negatively impact air quality. Human activity and accompanying pets throughout wildlife habitat for any of the public uses on the Refuge will continue to result in some temporary disturbance to wildlife. In addition, the use of trails where photography occurs may result in soil compaction, erosion, trampling of vegetation, and production of litter or human waste. These impacts have a low potential of leading to water quality degradation in waterbodies near trails. Visitor access, however, is typically by individuals or groups that participate in recreational activities for short durations. The Refuge will continue to confine the use to designated roads and trails where facilities exist specifically to accommodate the use while reducing resource impacts. Therefore, destruction or negative impacts to habitat and associated vegetation are minor.

Alternatively, photography may result in long-term beneficial impacts to the human environment. This use may increase the viewers' understanding and appreciation of wildlife and their habitat needs while allowing visitors to capture images that preserve their Refuge experience for years to come. In this sense, photography supports interpretation and heightened understanding of the Refuge's role in wildlife conservation.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from photography. Ultimately, this activity will add to public use opportunities on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment. The wide variety of public use opportunities available on the Refuge will increase public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. This will benefit the Service's overall mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that photography remains a compatible use:

1. Temporary access restrictions may be used to protect sensitive resources from harassment.
2. The Refuge prohibits night access to the entire Refuge with the exception of Doris Campground, main roads, and night fishing.
3. The Refuge prohibits foot and vehicle travel on trails and secondary roads during fall and winter permit hunts.
4. The Refuge will limit and control Refuge access through enforcement of Refuge regulations, signage, and education of the public as to the purpose of the Refuge and responsibilities of visitors.
5. Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for the purpose of wildlife observation or photography and charge a fee or tuition for their service are required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge. This requirement ensures that private businesses are not unfairly making a profit from public lands and provides a mechanism for the Refuge to regulate where and when commercial activities occur.

Justification:

As defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, wildlife-dependent recreational uses may be authorized on a refuge when they are compatible and not inconsistent with public safety. Photography is included as one of these six activities, which are to receive enhanced and priority consideration in Refuge planning and management. Regulated photography as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience wildlife firsthand and develop knowledge about species' behaviors, adaptations, and habitat requirements while also developing an understanding of the Refuge's role in wildlife and habitat conservation through the National Wildlife Refuge System. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that photography, in accordance with the stipulations

provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 15-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2027

References Cited:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2009. Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Unpublished Data.

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Picnicking (Including Rental of Boulder Cabin)

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Picnicking is an existing recreational use on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Although this use is not one of the priority public uses, picnicking is supportive of wildlife-dependent recreational uses, including wildlife observation and photography, which can increase the public’s awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources. Picnicking may occur at four day-use areas and at the Boulder Cabin, which is available for large group picnicking by reservation.

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing use through Public Use Area Objective 10 in the CCP: “Provide year-round developed picnicking opportunities at established picnic

grounds and provide alternatives off-Refuge for times of high demand within six years of CCP approval.”

b) Where is the use conducted?

Four day-use picnicking areas (Mt. Scott, Lost Lake, Boulder, and Sunset Picnic Areas) with a total of 85 individual sites, are scattered throughout the Public Use Area. Mt. Scott Picnic Area is located directly south of Mt. Scott and west of Lake Elmer Thomas. Lost Lake and Boulder Picnic Areas are centrally located approximately half-way between Refuge Headquarters and Doris Campground. Sunset Picnic Area is located on the west end of the Refuge at the base of Elk Mountain. Road signs direct visitors to the areas, which are highlighted on the Public Use Facilities map in the CCP. In addition, Boulder Cabin is available for group picnicking with a fee. Boulder Cabin is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Picnic Area Name	Number of Sites
Mt. Scott	27
Boulder	22
Lost Lake	20
Sunset	16
Boulder Cabin	7
TOTAL	92

c) When is the use conducted?

The Refuge offers picnicking opportunities year-round during daylight hours only. Picnic areas receive a sporadic but high level of use on weekends and holidays.

d) How is the use conducted?

Fire rings and grills are available at the picnic areas, but guests must check current Fire Danger Ratings at Refuge gates or on the Web (at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/oklahoma/wichitamountains/current.html>) to determine use regulations. Trash receptacles, parking areas, and restrooms are available at all picnic areas. Potable water, however, is not available at picnic areas.

At the four main picnicking areas, picnicking is free for all guests on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no limitation on group size, but the Refuge plans to develop infrastructure and services to facilitate group size management, as discussed in the following text.

Through Public Use Area Management Objective 10 of the CCP, the Refuge plans some changes to the current picnicking opportunities. First, the Refuge intends to enhance the quality of the visitor experience in the heavily-trafficked Mt. Scott Picnic Area (high density use zone) by increasing interpretive services, interpretive signage, kid-friendly landscaping, and recycle and/or garbage services. The less-utilized picnic grounds at Boulder and Lost Lake would also be improved to encourage use at these sites while minimizing use in the low density areas. The Refuge will promote off-Refuge opportunities

through strengthened partnerships with the Lake Elmer Thomas Recreation Area and local communities in order to meet the demand for picnicking while protecting Refuge resources. As part of this strategy, the Refuge will improve the Lake Elmer Thomas Recreational Area (LETRA) connection and other trail connections to provide linkages to off-Refuge recreational opportunities. With these improvements, the Refuge hopes to minimize large group size traffic at the Sunset Picnic Area, which borders and affects the Charons Garden Wilderness Area. Aside from building additional infrastructure at the other on- and off-Refuge picnicking facilities, the Refuge hopes to minimize negative impacts in the low density use and Wilderness areas by increasing awareness of other sites and expanding education on wilderness character.

Boulder Cabin can be rented for private group picnicking, occasionally associated with weddings and family reunions. Reservations can be taken up to three months in advance by contacting Refuge Headquarters. Boulder Cabin Picnicking Area has one group picnic site with a shelter available for day-use only. Capacity for the site is a minimum of 20 people and a maximum of 60 people, with a responsible adult 18 years or older accompanying each group. The fee is \$5.00 for renting Boulder Cabin.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The Refuge is home to one of the largest and busiest interpretation and outreach programs in the National Wildlife Refuge System, and picnicking is directly related to this use and to all of the priority public uses. Picnicking has been a popular recreational pastime since the Refuge was designated in 1905. By 1983, the Visitor Service program at the Refuge had eliminated over half of the picnicking areas to protect natural resource and public use values, improve public safety, and meet national recreation management direction. The Refuge is maintaining the existing facilities in order to allow the use but link it more closely to the wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities that it supports. Although picnicking is not a wildlife-dependent recreational opportunity, it is closely related to wildlife observation, interpretation, and photography, as well as to all of the priority public uses. In addition, picnicking at Boulder Cabin provides a unique opportunity for Refuge visitors to connect with the history of this nationally-recognized special place (as it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places).

Availability of Resources:

General Picnic Areas

Refuge resources required to administer picnicking on the Refuge are minimal. Very little staff time and finances are required to provide this use as the facilities have existed for numerous years. The primary tasks related to this use are maintenance of the existing sites and access points as well as law enforcement to ensure that Refuge visitors comply with Refuge regulations. Additional trail connections and infrastructure expansion will require additional staff and budget.

Boulder Cabin Picnic Area

Primary tasks related to rental of the Boulder Cabin Picnic Area include coordinating reservations with interested parties and monitoring the use to ensure that no damage is incurred at the historic site. Fee collection offsets some of the maintenance costs the Refuge may incur to maintain the integrity of this facility.

Improving the six wildlife-dependent and supportive recreation activities and facilities that in turn support the Refuge's picnicking opportunities will be considered through Projects 23a-d, 24a-c, and 25a-e of the CCP. Through Projects 23 and 24, the Refuge aims to manage primary and secondary compatible supportive recreation activities on the Refuge in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resource management activities. Through Project 25, the Refuge intends to maintain or improve public use facilities, including those associated with picnicking, such as interpretive signs or kiosks. As the Refuge is only considering improvements to programs and facilities that indirectly benefit picnicking, no additional Refuge resources would be necessary to oversee picnicking as a singular use.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Picnicking has the potential to adversely impact the physical and biological environment at the site-specific areas where the use is allowed. Human presence at picnicking sites may result in disturbance to wildlife, particularly on holidays and weekends when picnicking participation is high. With over 1.5 million visitors each year, however, it is likely that wildlife species on the Refuge have acclimated to human presence. Visitor use in and near picnicking areas may cause soil compaction, trampling of vegetation, plant destruction, and production of litter. The Refuge provides trash receptacles at each picnic site to deter visitors from littering, and the CCP proposes that infrastructure is improved in high use areas to better distribute the use while minimizing effects to resources. Despite this, these possible human use impacts may result in adverse impacts to soils, habitat, and water quality.

Sunset Picnic Area is located very close to the Charons Garden Wilderness Area. Currently, this use may result in similar environmental consequences to Wilderness as those described in the Public Use Area. Through the CCP, however, the Refuge is attempting to enhance opportunities elsewhere in an effort to minimize picnicking visitors near the Wilderness area where there is high potential to degrade resources or even wilderness character. By expanding infrastructure in other areas, the Refuge hopes to naturally detract people from bringing large groups to picnic at Sunset. These changes are proposed to limit litter, human disturbance, and noise, while maintaining or enhancing the wilderness character of the area. Furthermore, offering this wilderness experience to individuals or small groups of Refuge visitors seeking solitude at Sunset Picnic Area will further their understanding of nature in its most intact state.

Boulder Cabin Picnicking Area offers guests another unique opportunity to picnic at a site listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This opportunity may result in the same general adverse impacts to resources at the site, but it may also heighten visitors' understanding and appreciation of the historic role of the Refuge, the cabin site, and environmental resources. In this regard, this opportunity will result in long-term beneficial impacts to the human environment. The existing facilities at Boulder Cabin are large enough to house groups of 20 to 60 individuals without resulting in long-term natural resource degradation possible at other picnic areas. Therefore, Boulder Cabin can accommodate the demand for picnicking in large groups while minimizing potential adverse impacts to the physical and biological environment elsewhere.

Proposed partnerships may result in long-term beneficial impacts to the Refuge and potential partners, as off-Refuge areas gain increased visitation while decreased use on the Refuge protects resources. Partnerships may also facilitate increased communication between the Refuge and its neighbors, leading to an increased understanding of the ecosystem in which the Refuge exists.

Construction of trail connections may result in disturbance to wildlife, noise, displacement of vegetation, and soil compaction. Ultimately, however, these impacts will be short-term, lasting only during trail construction. Once complete, the trails will facilitate travel between Refuge sites and off-Refuge neighboring sites. Thus, visitors can still enjoy the Refuge experience and use trail connections to participate in desired picnicking off-Refuge.

Picnicking at all sites may also result in long-term beneficial impacts to the visitor experience and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Picnicking is supportive of all six of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses allowed on the Refuge, which will increase public awareness of the Refuge and conservation issues. Furthermore, picnicking may draw more visitors to the Refuge who participate in other wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the Refuge or those available on nearby lands. In this sense, the use may provide short-term benefits to the socioeconomics of the community. Picnicking may also increase the viewers' understanding and appreciation of wildlife and their habitat needs as well as the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System in resource conservation.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts of picnicking. Ultimately, this activity will add to available public use opportunities on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment. The wide variety of public use opportunities available on the Refuge will increase public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. This will benefit the Service's overall mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that picnicking remains a compatible use:

1. Possession of alcoholic beverages is prohibited on the Refuge, including the picnicking areas.
2. Fires are allowed only in the designated picnicking areas. Fires must be built in grates and grills provided for that purpose. Dead, fallen timber may be used. Fires must not be left unattended and must be completely extinguished before leaving the area. During periods of very high fire danger, wood fires may be prohibited. Campfires and open fires of any kind are strictly prohibited in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area.

- Pets are permitted on the Refuge if kept on a leash at all times. Owners are responsible for pet behavior, including barking and cleaning up waste. Free roaming pets are prohibited on any portion of the Refuge.

Justification:

Picnicking is a supportive recreational activity secondary to wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, environmental education, hunting, and fishing. Thus, this recreational use enhances the wildlife experience by giving the visitor a chance to sit, relax, and view the Refuge up-close. Regulated picnicking as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience the Refuge in a high quality, safe, wholesome, and enjoyable recreational experience. This activity will not conflict with any of the priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that picnicking, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Scuba Diving

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Scuba diving is an existing recreational use occurring on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Though not a priority wildlife-dependent recreational use, scuba diving is supportive of underwater wildlife observation.

b) Where is the use conducted?

Scuba diving is allowed only on Lake Elmer Thomas.

c) When is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors may engage in scuba diving on the Refuge year-round during daylight hours only.

d) How is the use conducted?

Recreational scuba diving is unregulated with the exception of it being limited to daylight hours and allowed only on Lake Elmer Thomas. The Refuge will monitor the use to determine if other regulations are necessary. Scuba diving occurs in accordance with Cooperative Agreement #1448-0002-92-233 between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge), U.S. Army (Fort Sill Military Reservation), and the State of Oklahoma (Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation).

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Scuba diving on Lake Elmer Thomas is an existing recreational use on the Refuge that exists in support of wildlife observation.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including scuba diving. No additional Refuge resources would be necessary to oversee scuba diving, with the exception of some staff time devoted to monitoring this use.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Changes in habitat or water and shoreline quality are not expected as a result of this activity due to the depth of water that divers generally utilize.

Scuba diving is a short-term and infrequent use on the Refuge that may result in beneficial impacts to the visitor experience. This activity would be supportive of wildlife observation and perhaps interpretation, making this activity a wildlife-dependent supportive use.

Cumulative Impacts:

At current levels, there are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from scuba diving. This use occurs in conjunction with wildlife-dependent recreational uses and adds to the available recreational opportunities on the Refuge. Therefore, it may result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that scuba diving remains a compatible use:

1. Activity is monitored to assure that all Refuge rules and regulations are followed, as outlined in the Cooperative Agreement.
2. Scuba diving is observational only and does not include fishing using underwater techniques.
3. Scuba diving will only occur in Lake Elmer Thomas.
4. Harassment and feeding of wildlife is prohibited.
5. Alcoholic beverages are prohibited on the Refuge.
6. Swimming is prohibited on the Refuge.

Justification:

Scuba diving provides the only feasible means of observing aquatic species and their habitat on the Refuge and is therefore considered supportive of wildlife observation. Unlike swimming, scuba diving does not take place in shallow areas, which would promote water turbidity and shoreline erosion.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Rock Sports

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Rock sports are an existing historic use occurring on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. Rock sports include traditional climbing, rappelling, and bouldering—activities that require specialized equipment such as ropes, harnesses, anchors, and pads. While engaging in rock sports, individuals also engage in wildlife-dependent recreation through wildlife observation and interpretation. In this manner, rock sports are an existing supportive recreational use.

The Refuge proposes to continue this existing Refuge use through Public Use Area Management Objective 11: “Within one year of CCP approval, manage rock sport

opportunities to provide for better protection of Refuge resources by increasing, improving, and maintaining administration of these activities.”

b) Where is the use conducted?

Rock sports are allowed throughout the Public Use Area of the Refuge, with the notable exception of no rappelling in the Narrows. The primary rock sport areas of the Refuge are located at Mt. Scott, the Narrows, the Meadows, and several locations within the Charons Garden Wilderness Area.

c) When is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors may engage in rock sports on the Refuge year-round during daylight hours only.

d) How is the use conducted?

Rock sports on the Refuge include traditional climbing, rappelling, and bouldering—activities that require specialized equipment such as ropes, harnesses, anchors, and pads. The Refuge works in collaboration with the Wichita Mountains Climbers Coalition (WMCC) to ensure that rock sports do not impact other user groups or natural resources, and to manage the installation and replacement of permanent anchors. A growing issue in the Public Use Area of the Refuge is the relationship between group size and the impact on other visitors and on wildlife. Large groups (over 15 people) tend to produce more noise, which distracts from the quality of other visitors’ experience and disrupts wildlife.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The high quality granite domes, slabs, and boulders of the Refuge offer some of the finest rock sports in southwest Oklahoma. Multi-pitch routes set in an undeveloped landscape provide the climbing community unparalleled opportunities to experience the wildlife and wild places of the Refuge. It is estimated that only a small fraction of all Refuge visitors engage in rock sports (less than one percent), but this level of use is of great importance to this rock climbing community due limited opportunities nearby. This use also facilitates wildlife observation and interpretation, both of which are priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including rock sports. Through the CCP, however, the Refuge proposes to provide for better protection of Refuge resources by increasing, improving, and maintaining administration of these activities. To make these enhancements possible, changes to these uses will require additional time, money, and staff. Through Project 24b of the CCP, the Refuge aims to manage compatible supportive recreation activities on the Refuge in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resource management activities. The Refuge proposes an additional budget of \$150,000 for a use thresholds study and other administrative tasks to adequately fund the overall project and to improve administration of and opportunities that assist supportive recreation including rock sports.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Potential negative environmental impacts associated with climbing activity include soil erosion and removal of vegetation, primarily through trail proliferation from climbers seeking foot access to climbing routes. Potential habitat damage from actual climbing includes reduction in coverage and species diversity of lichens and possible damage to spikemosses, lipferns, and other rooted vascular vegetation. Use of permanent climbing anchors (bolts) is also identified as an environmental concern, particularly in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area, with possible impacts including aesthetic degradation as well as effects on the rock itself.

Probably the most harmful impact to Refuge fauna is human disturbance, including mere presence in limited and specialized habitat used by climbers. Impacts include behavioral changes for some species, which can interfere with reproduction and thus lower productivity. Most animals react to human disturbance by avoidance and leaving the disturbed area.

This impact is very difficult to quantify, but based purely on numbers of participants, climbing activity would be much less significant than would other public uses such as hiking, picnicking, camping, etc.

Impacts to endangered species are believed to be minimal. Black-capped vireos utilize the Charons Garden Wilderness Area, but studies to date have not shown impact on vireos from climbing activity. Climbing, however, may directly impact specialized cliff/rock face habitat more than does other public uses. Indirect impacts of climbing include relationships among climbers and other Refuge visitors. One indirect effect of climbing is its visual impact. Some Refuge visitors are attracted to climbing or rappelling activity (spectator sport).

Other Refuge visitors seeking solitude and a more undisturbed wilderness atmosphere tend to avoid climbing areas. Socioeconomic impacts are positive for area motels, service stations, and restaurants. Other Refuge users such as bird watchers, wildlife photographers, and environmental educators occasionally experience conflicts with rappellers (especially large and/or noisy groups). Rather than direct conflict, however, more commonly the reaction of these other users is to avoid popular climbing areas to seek solitude and a more undisturbed wilderness atmosphere elsewhere. More detailed discussion of impacts including literature references are included in the environmental assessment.

Cumulative Impacts:

Cumulative effects of climbing and other public use are difficult to quantify, but climbing is only one of several uses that contributes to such negative environmental impacts as soil erosion and vegetation removal (trail proliferation) as well as wildlife disturbance impacts. The impact of climbing thus could contribute to cumulative effects of Refuge visitors. Rock sports occur in conjunction with wildlife observation, photography, and interpretation, each of which will ultimately result in beneficial cumulative impacts by increasing public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Ultimately, this will benefit the Service's mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings,

special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that rock sports remain a compatible use:

1. Some locations or sites may be closed seasonally when necessary to protect resources (i.e., nest locations, den sites)
2. The Refuge will prohibit rappelling in the Narrows.
3. All rock sport participants must register on site so the Refuge can monitor use patterns (such as the type of use, area of use, group size, etc.) and public safety.
4. Group size will be restricted to 15 people or less in Wilderness. In addition, group size in designated high use portions of the Public Use Area may exceed 30 people without a Special Use Permit, whereas a permit will be required for groups of 30 people or more in the areas of medium use.

Justification:

The proposed action takes into account the major resource and environmental concerns as well as socioeconomic factors such as past history and management of technical rock climbing on the Refuge and restrictions on other Refuge recreationists. It recognizes that climbing, with certain environmental and ethical restrictions, is a legitimate recreational activity that has been historically allowed on the Refuge. It provides a primitive recreational activity in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area consistent with the purpose of the Wilderness Act and subordinate to Refuge purposes. Through the Wichita Mountains Climbers Coalition's Advisory Bolting Committee and overall efforts to foster a spirit of genuine cooperation with the climbing community and improve environmental ethics of all "backcountry" users, it is generally accepted as reasonable and fair by climbers who will thus tend to monitor their own sport and voluntarily cooperate and comply. This spirit of acceptance and cooperation is especially critical given the "backcountry" nature of climbing activity and the relatively small number of Refuge staff usually available for monitoring activities in climbing areas.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Running Events

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

For many years, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has been home to a marathon, marathon relay, and 5k run on Refuge public access roads. In the past, these foot races primarily occurred for public health, fundraising, and community awareness purposes and were sponsored by the Comanche County Memorial Hospital. Hosting the event on the Refuge supports wildlife observation and interpretation, two priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses. In this manner, marathons are an existing supportive recreational use. Any organization that wishes to host a marathon or other running event is responsible for contacting the Refuge and receiving a Special Use Permit prior to the event.

Through the CCP, the Refuge proposes to continue this use, but event routes are to be focused primarily in previously-widened public access roads in the Public Use Area of the Refuge for safety purposes.

b) Where is the use conducted?

For safety purposes, marathon routes are restricted to previously-widened public access roads in the Public Use Area of the Refuge. These include State Highways 49 and 115 from the Cache gate to the Medicine Park gate. Some courses may continue off-Refuge.

c) When is the use conducted?

The Refuge will determine appropriate timing for new proposals of running events in a Special Use Permit.

d) How is the use conducted?

The Refuge regulates this use through a Special Use Permit issued to the host of the event. The Special Use Permit lists any regulations on the timing, location, magnitude, and method of the events. Event hosts are responsible for educating runners on safety information while participating in the events. The host also is responsible for posting (and subsequently removing) temporary signage at strategic locations on the Refuge to direct participants. Hosts may establish temporary water stations on the Refuge as well, but these must be removed and cleaned after the race is completed. Medical staff must be present on the Refuge to evaluate runner condition during the event as an additional safety precaution.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The use is proposed because the Refuge provides terrain and landscape not found anywhere else in southern Oklahoma. The moderately sloping hills of the Refuge provide challenges for both beginning and experienced runners, and the wildlife and habitat provide a beautiful setting that will encourage participation in the events.

The events are proposed to bring hundreds of visitors to the Refuge, which will provide an opportunity for the Refuge to conduct public interpretation and environmental education. Guided hikes may be planned in conjunction with the races, as well as informational kiosks at the event headquarters, which will further the goals and objectives of the Refuge and the Service. The Refuge will provide informational brochures about Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System to be inserted into each runner's packet.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge presently experiences high daily visitation and has existing staff assigned to manage varied compatible recreational uses, including running events. Through the CCP, however, the Refuge proposes to limit the events to paved roads. Through Projects 23a-d, 24a-c, and 25a-e of the CCP, the Refuge aims to manage compatible primary and supportive recreation activities on the Refuge in a way that minimizes conflict with other users and natural resource management activities while improving public use facilities. Road enhancements will be considered and prioritized through this supportive recreation improvement project.

The events will be held with minimal financial cost to the Refuge. Infrastructure use is limited to paved roadways and shoulders. Refuge personnel may need to adjust schedules, including law enforcement and Search and Rescue personnel, to ensure safety of visitors and participants. Organizers provide medical personnel to assist event participants and bystanders. Additional visitor services staff may be necessary to provide interpretation and environmental education to event participants and bystanders. This likely can be handled through a temporary change of duty hours and will not result in increased salaries.

All necessary resources will be provided by the event organizers, including post-event cleanup.

However, additional restroom facility maintenance may be required following the events due to the increased visitation. Natural resources will not be impacted by the proposed use as currently planned. Monitoring will consist of providing a venue for comments on the Refuge's website, where interested parties will be able to submit suggestions regarding the events and the overall quality of visitor experiences. This task might result in an increase in correspondence to the Refuge but should be a negligible expense. Some staff time will be required to participate in annual planning meetings and to ensure compatibility with Refuge and Service missions. These responsibilities are considered standard duties and will be incorporated into a normally scheduled workday, resulting in no additional funding required.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short-term Impacts:

The area of the Refuge most affected by running events is the Mt. Scott area and high density use zone. Much of this area has undergone or has planned road improvements and can provide a clear line of sight for vehicular traffic. To ensure that existing wildlife-dependent recreational activities are not impaired, routes for past races have been identified that begin and end off-Refuge, with the exception of the Mt. Scott 5k. The routes were designed to encourage participants to “spread out” by the time they reach the Refuge, further decreasing the likelihood of conflict with existing uses. This method of planning will continue for this use.

It is anticipated that 500-750 participants will register for the proposed events. This level of participation would be manageable with existing Refuge resources. To ensure manageability in the future, with the expectation that the events would become larger, organizers and the Refuge would agree to conduct formal after-action evaluations and written reports following the events.

Report findings would be used to identify any issues of concern, including establishment of a limit for number of participants.

Possible short-term impacts of road-based events are the disruption of vehicular traffic through the Refuge, increased litter due to increased visitation, and increased noise along the roadways.

Wildlife is not likely to be impacted, as animals found in these areas are accustomed to persistent vehicular, foot, and bicycle traffic. As a condition of the events, participants are warned that the area is open-range and that if animals are encountered on or near the roadway, they must wait for animals to pass before they continue the event. Litter patrols will be conducted by the event organizers, and post-event pickup is a condition of the event approval.

Increased noise is likely only an issue at the starting and ending points of the races and at the relay points during the marathon relay. The starting and ending points for all races (except the Mt. Scott 5k) are located off Refuge and will not cause noise related issues. The Mt. Scott 5k

begins in the Mt. Scott Picnic Area and short-duration noise is expected at the 7:00 a.m. start of the race. Other visitors to the Refuge will not be affected by this noise, because the picnic area does not open to the public until 9:00 a.m. The race ends at the top of Mt. Scott, which is also closed to the public until 9:00 a.m. Few bystanders are expected along the race routes; therefore, increased noise is not expected along the course.

The disruption of vehicular traffic on the roadways is of primary concern. The main Refuge road is a connection between two State highways, Highway 49 and Highway 115, and receives commuter traffic as well as use by visitors engaged in priority wildlife-dependent recreational activities. Significant disruption of this traffic flow for periods extending beyond a few minutes would negatively impact commuters and existing Refuge visitors and might exceed the compatibility threshold.

Runner safety is another concern. Runners will be informed that wildlife is free ranging on the Refuge and that they must wait for animals on or near the road to pass before they continue the event. This should decrease the likelihood of conflicts between runners and wildlife. The main Refuge road receives significant traffic during this time of year. As currently proposed, the use should not disrupt the traffic flow beyond an acceptable level. The length of the events will result in participants being “strung out” and spaced apart. This spacing, coupled with existing Refuge speed limits (30-45 miles per hour), is conducive to ensuring that existing recreational activities and vehicular traffic can continue with minimal impairment.

Long-term Impacts

The event, by itself, is anticipated to have virtually no impact on either Refuge resources or the ability of the Refuge to fulfill the Service mission at the current level of participation. It is expected, however, that this event will draw more participants in the future, and the potential exists that more events will be proposed by other organizations. Either has the potential to strain Refuge resources. As a result, each proposed event (new or existing) will be evaluated based on the overall impact of all events and will only be approved and permitted when minimal impacts to Refuge resources and existing wildlife-dependent recreation can be assured.

Additionally, promotion of physical fitness activities on Refuges is consistent with Executive Order 13266, which encourages Federal land management agencies to provide physical activity opportunities to the public.

Race events, while a short-term and infrequent use on the Refuge, may result in long-term beneficial impacts to the visitor experience. These events could potentially bring hundreds of visitors to the Refuge, which would provide an opportunity for the Refuge to conduct public interpretation, making this activity a wildlife-dependent supportive use. In this manner, these established race events would occur in support of interpretation, wildlife observation, and photography.

Cumulative Impacts

Currently, similar activities occur on a smaller scale on Refuge roads. Individuals and families regularly walk, jog, and ride bicycles along Refuge roadways with no observable impact to Refuge resources. This use, as proposed, is manageable with existing Refuge resources,

However, this event should be evaluated annually to ensure continued compatibility.

A significant increase in participation in this event or an increase in requests for additional, similar events could impair wildlife-dependent recreational activities and would therefore exceed the Refuge's compatibility threshold. Increased participation or request for additional events must be evaluated in context of all events scheduled on the Refuge to ensure that cumulative impacts are minimized or avoided.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that marathons remain a compatible:

1. Participants must yield to wildlife on the Refuge.
2. Participants must run facing traffic as required by State law for all pedestrians.
3. Participants must not materially interfere with other Refuge uses or visitors engaged in the pursuit of an authorized activity.
4. Event signs and mile markers will be removed by race officials immediately following the event.
5. All necessary resources to host the event will be provided by the event organizers.
6. We request approval of all materials discussing the Refuge, Refuge wildlife, or facilities.
7. Participants must be informed in writing and verbally of the fact that longhorn cattle, elk, deer, and bison roam free on the Refuge and they may be encountered during the event. Wildlife is dangerous and should not be approached or disturbed in any manner. Disturbance includes any action that results in a change in behavior of an animal.
8. Event organizers are responsible for ensuring that individuals are physically capable of participating in the event without risk of serious injury or death.
9. A Refuge brochure and information on the National Wildlife Refuge System will be part of the event registrant information packet.
10. Event officials will provide litter and post-event pickup to help clean up litter along roadsides after the races.

Justification:

Running events occur on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge as a secondary use that facilitates the primary wildlife-dependent recreation uses defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Essentially, these events facilitate interpretation, wildlife observation, and photography. Regulated running events as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience wildlife firsthand and develop awareness, understanding, and appreciation of fish and wildlife resources. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that running events, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, are a compatible use that will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Executive Order 13266 of June 20, 2002 - Activities to Promote Personal Fitness

Section 1 (d) While personal fitness is an individual responsibility, the Federal Government may, within the authority and funds otherwise available, expand the opportunities for individuals to empower themselves to improve their general health. Such opportunities may include improving the flow of information about personal fitness, assisting in the utilization of that information, increasing the accessibility of resources for physical activity and reducing barriers to achieving good personal fitness.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING: Department of Health and Human Services (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Indian Health Service, and Office of Public Health and Science); and Department of Agriculture (Forest Service and Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion); Department of the Interior (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service) Department of the Army (Army Corps of Engineers): The cooperating agencies propose to work together to promote uses and benefits of the Nation's public lands and water resources to enhance the physical and psychological health and well being of the American people. This collaborative effort is being undertaken to help promote healthy lifestyles through sound nutrition, physical activity, and recreation in America's great outdoors.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Scientific Research

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates scientific research, including surveys and inventories, on the Refuge. Research is conducted by outside (i.e., non-agency) parties in accordance with Refuge regulations and goals and objectives. The use involves collection of information that is used for analysis and reporting, and often also entails collection of plant, animal, soil, rock, water, or air samples from the Refuge for analysis. The most common modes of access are by foot or vehicles, although boats and aircraft may occasionally be permitted. All outside requested research is evaluated on a case-by-case

basis before approval is granted to ensure compatibility. This activity is not a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and it requires a Special Use Permit.

b) Where is the use conducted?

This use may occur Refuge-wide, including and especially within the Special Use Area/Proposed Research Natural Area, though specific locations will be described in the individual Special Use Permits.

c) When is the use conducted?

Time frames for this use will vary depending on the request, environmental concerns, and restrictions on when the use can be conducted and will be described in the individual Special Use Permits.

d) How is the use conducted?

Requests to conduct scientific research on the Refuge must be approved by the Refuge Manager. The Refuge Manager evaluates the following criteria to determine if the research will be allowed: 1) viability of research, 2) contributions to Refuge resources and management implications, and 3) impacts on Refuge resources. When the use meets these criteria, the Refuge Manager then issues a Special Use Permit with specific restrictions on the allowable timing, location, and methods of scientific research. In 2010, 13 permits were issued for research activities.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Research is often needed to improve our knowledge and understanding of our environment, monitor environmental changes, and to collect information needed to make more informed management decisions.

Availability of Resources:

There is very little Refuge staff or budgetary resources required to oversee scientific research. The resources that are necessary to provide and administer this use are already available within current and anticipated Refuge budgets. Staff time associated with the administration of this use is primarily related to review of requests, interactions with individuals who request the use, issuance of Special Use Permits, and monitoring the impacts of the use on Refuge resources.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Research proposals with the potential for adverse impacts to Refuge resources are not approved or are subject to special conditions to minimize the potential for adverse impacts. Thus, the scientific research projects that occur on the Refuge generally are limited to those with no, or only minor, effects. In 2010, only 13 Special Use Permits were issued for this use. The action still has the potential to result in some level of disturbance or mortality to wildlife and disturbance or removal of plants, soil, or rock surfaces due to human activities and collection of soil, rock, wildlife, or plant specimens. However, the very low frequency and duration of this use will not result in any significant resource impacts.

Cumulative Impacts:

Only negligible adverse cumulative impacts resulting from scientific research are anticipated. Such impacts would be associated with surface disturbances associated motorized access. Ultimately, this activity will add to the diversity of information available on the Refuge, which, in combination, will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

Current research has and future research will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine if the project supports Refuge and Service goals, will be beneficial to Refuge purposes, and will not cause significant impacts to Refuge resources or other users. Permits will not be issued to those projects not fulfilling these criteria.

Justification:

Research by outside authorities provides valuable opportunities to the Refuge for study on various components of the Refuge environment and wildlife in a more comprehensive manner than Service staff time and funding allows. Researchers provide expertise in various fields to Refuge staff that can assist the Refuge in management planning. Outside research also provides educational opportunities to schools and universities that are not available at other locations. Regulated scientific research has little impact to wildlife or habitat since few people participate, and the Refuge only approves projects with little to no adverse impact on Refuge resources. Permitted research activities will be subject to conditions to assure these activities will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that scientific research, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Tree Cutting

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates tree cutting on the Refuge to remove eastern red cedar, oak, or other woody species from specified locations for Refuge management purposes. This Refuge management economic activity may include removal of native vegetation due to overgrowth, removal of invasive species due to habitat destruction, or individual harvest of Christmas trees. This activity is not a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and it requires a Special Use Permit.

b) Where is the use conducted?

This use may occur at areas on the Refuge where habitat degradation has occurred due to overgrown vegetation or spread of invasive species. Specific locations will be described in individual Special Use Permits.

c) When is the use conducted?

Time frames for this use will vary depending on the request to the Refuge. Restrictions on when the use can be conducted will be described in individual Special Use Permits.

d) How is the use conducted?

This use will occur on an as needed basis, when the Refuge determines that conditions warrant tree cutting or removal of downed debris. Special Use Permits will be issued to trained and qualified woodcutters. The area, amount, method, timing, and extent of tree cutting will be carefully controlled in the special conditions of the Special Use Permit.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Tree cutting is proposed because it will allow the Refuge to remove seed sources of encroaching woody vegetation into grasslands. In addition, it will provide clear fire breaks from which the Refuge can better control both wild and prescribed fire. Allowing members of the public to perform this activity will allow the Refuge to benefit from the control of invasive species or increased habitat quality at no cost.

Availability of Resources:

There is very little Refuge staff or budgetary resources required to oversee tree cutting. The resources that are necessary to provide and administer this use are already available within current and anticipated Refuge budgets. Staff time associated with the administration of this use is primarily related to issuing Special Use Permits and monitoring the use; however, this action ultimately consists of an individual or entity such as the Friends of the Wichitas providing a service to the Refuge by accomplishing a Refuge management activity at no expense to the Refuge.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:Short- and Long-term Impacts:

Historically, tree cutting has been conducted infrequently. No Special Use Permits have been issued recently for this use. The action may result in some level of disturbance to wildlife, but the very low frequency and duration of this use will not result in any measurable resource impacts. Furthermore, impacts on Refuge lands are generally positive in that effective fire breaks are maintained by this practice, and fire risk is reduced as excessive fuel accumulations are decreased. In addition, removal of invasive species helps to protect grasslands from encroaching woody species. Also beneficial is that tree cutting results in the removal of concentrated seed sources, thereby providing beneficial long-term impacts to habitat in reducing the spread of invasive species. Tree cutting also produces beneficial impacts by clearing open areas where the Refuge can safely manage bison and longhorn cattle.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from tree cutting. This use occurs infrequently with a primary purpose of improving habitat conditions, thereby resulting in long-term beneficial impacts to Refuge resources. Therefore, tree cutting will not incrementally add to any resource impacts resulting from other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable future actions.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

All individuals or entities conducting tree cutting and removal on the Refuge must receive a Special Use Permit prior to actively participating in this activity. The permit will indicate when, where, and how the applicant may participate in the use.

Justification:

Tree cutting is permitted on the Refuge primarily as a management activity used to provide long-term beneficial impacts to habitat while also producing economic benefits to the contracted entities. The Refuge maintains control of the outside entity physically conducting this use through the Special Use Permit. Tree cutting has little adverse impact to wildlife or habitat since it is short-term in duration, site-specific, and infrequent. This activity will not conflict with any of the priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that tree cutting, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Visitor Operation of Amateur Radio Equipment

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

This Compatibility Determination evaluates visitor operation of amateur radio equipment on the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. The visitor uses portable equipment designed for the transmission and reception of high frequency, very high frequency, and/or ultra-high frequency radio signals, including simple antennae. Typically, this activity is done to broadcast to other licensed operators and usually occurs in association with events held on the Refuge. This activity is not a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and it requires a Special Use Permit in all instances.

b) Where is the use conducted?

The radio equipment and visitors will operate from a temporary site located within the existing 24,088-acre Public Use Area. When visitors request such use, the Refuge will specify locations where the use may be conducted in the Special Use Permit. In the past, permits have almost exclusively been issued for a site on top of Mt. Scott, where radio operators can easily transmit signals. Operators are allowed to participate in the use only in areas that are open for other recreational uses, and they may only occupy an area of space similar to other Refuge recreational users (such as one parking space).

c) When is the use conducted?

Time frames for this use will vary depending on the request, and restrictions on when the use can be conducted will be described in the individual Special Use Permits. In the past, this use was usually associated with the Refuge marathon each year, but the Refuge still anticipates occasional requests for radio equipment operation for other activities.

d) How is the use conducted?

When an individual requests to conduct amateur radio on the Refuge, that individual must formally request such use from the Refuge Manager. The Refuge Manager then issues the individual a Special Use Permit with specific restrictions on timing, location, and stipulations of the use. This will vary depending on the request, but a Special Use Permit is required for all radio operations on the Refuge. The permitted operator coordinates with the Refuge to identify the National Wildlife Refuge System and the Refuge itself in an effort for the Refuge to outreach to radio enthusiasts around the world. Operators also work with the Refuge to create “podcasts” or other similar records of events to outreach to other potential audiences.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

Public operation of amateur radio equipment has been allowed on the Refuge for many years without resulting in any disturbance or resource impacts beyond those that result from the more typical public uses. Amateur radio operators include some sort of promotional information for the Refuge during broadcasts to other radio operators. In this manner, the use supports enhancing the public’s general knowledge of the Refuge. Ultimately, as the use does not conflict with any other uses or cause any resource impacts on the Refuge, the Refuge sees no reason to discontinue allowing amateur radio operation.

Availability of Resources:

There is very little Refuge staff or budgetary resources required to oversee amateur radio operation. In the past, there have been one or two requests for this use per year; staff time associated with this use includes interacting with those who request the use and preparing Special Use Permits. The resources that are necessary to provide and administer this use are already available within current and anticipated Refuge budgets.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:Short- and Long-term Impacts:

In the past, public participation in amateur radio operation on the Refuge has occurred once or twice a year. This activity mainly occurs on Mt. Scott in the designated high density use area of the Refuge, which is heavily trafficked by other recreational users. The action may result in some of the same effects of all public use activities, including some wildlife disturbance, trampling of vegetation, and soil compaction depending on foot travel by operators. Therefore, specific guidance and limits on the use will be addressed in the Special Use Permit to ensure that any adverse resource impacts resulting from this use are minimized. Ultimately, it is expected the very low frequency and duration of this use in areas where other recreational uses occur will not result in any measurable resource impacts. In addition, promotion of the Refuge by amateur radio operators may result in increased awareness of the Refuge.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from amateur radio operation.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that amateur radio equipment operation remain a compatible use:

1. All individuals interested in amateur radio operation on the Refuge must receive a Special Use Permit prior to actively participating in this activity. The permit will indicate when, where, and how the applicant may participate in the use.
2. Each permittee may only occupy an area of space similar to other Refuge recreational users (i.e., one parking space).
3. Each permittee agrees to discontinue the activity if conditions become unsafe due to inclement weather or if the Refuge deems necessary due to conflict with wildlife or the visiting public.
4. Each operator must also incorporate information about the National Wildlife Refuge System and the Refuge itself to create an opportunity for the Refuge to outreach to radio enthusiasts around the world.

Justification:

Regulated amateur radio operation as described here will provide the visitor with a chance to enjoy this recreational activity on the Refuge while having very little impact on the physical and biological environment. This use has little impact to wildlife or habitat since it occurs so infrequently. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that amateur radio, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2022

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Wildlife Observation

Refuge Name: Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Wichita Mountains was originally established as a Forest Reserve by President William McKinley in 1901 through the authority provided by the Act of Congress entitled, “An Act to Repeal Timber - Culture Laws, and for other purposes.” By proclamation of President Theodore Roosevelt, on June 2, 1905, based on a special Act of Congress (33 Stat. 614 “An Act for the Protection of Wild Animals and Birds in the Wichita Forest Reserve”, January 24, 1905), the land was further designated as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The land was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the National Wildlife Refuge System. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

Refuge Purpose(s):

1. “...set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (33 Stat. 614, dated January 24, 1905)
2. “...to be set aside for the protection of game animals and birds and be recognized as a breeding place thereof.” (President Theodore Roosevelt, proclamation of June 2, 1905)
3. “... to assure that an increasing population, accompanied by expanding settlement and growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States and its possessions, leaving no lands designated for preservation and protection in their natural condition.” (The Wilderness Act, September 3, 1964)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:

The mission of the 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.

Description of Use:

a) What is the use?

Wildlife observation encompasses the act of viewing, listening to, and watching animal behavior and habitats in as natural a setting as possible. This activity, particularly driving observation, is the most popular public use of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge offers world-class wildlife viewing with opportunities to see bison, elk, white-tailed deer, turkey, and prairie dogs, as well as a host of small mammals, birds, and reptiles. The Refuge proposes to continue this existing wildlife-dependent recreational use through Public Use Area Objective 2 in the CCP: “Throughout the life of the CCP, continue to allow

public use access and provide facilities that contribute to spectacular viewing opportunities for over one million visitors per year.”

b) Where is the use conducted?

The 24,088 Public Use Area is open to public access for wildlife observation opportunities via foot, bicycle, and vehicle travel. Over 50 miles of paved roads, 17.7 miles of hiking trails, and 13 miles of dirt roads facilitate a range of wildlife observation experiences. There are 89 parking areas, ranging from roadside pullouts to fully-developed parking lots, scattered along the Refuge road system to facilitate driving observation. The Refuge has one wildlife observation blind at the Environmental Education Center. Few specific viewing facilities have been developed due to the mobility of wildlife species on the Refuge, but the Turkey Creek prairie dog town and viewing area is complete with a paved pullout, parking lot, and two interpretive signs. The accessible nature trail at Quanah Parker Lake also offers waterfowl and wetland wildlife viewing with four interpretive signs and accessible restrooms. In addition, the Refuge will manage for spectacular viewing opportunities in the Charons Garden Wilderness Area by improving wilderness conditions per Wilderness Area Management Objective 1 of the CCP. Through the CCP, the Refuge plans to upgrade existing facilities, construct new facilities, including the Jed Johnson Tower and trail, and develop and designate wildlife observation routes using existing public roads and trails to allow for improved viewing opportunities. The Refuge also proposes to add two viewing blinds at Quanah Parker Lake/EE Center and Lake Elmer Thomas off of the picnic area.

c) When is the use conducted?

Refuge visitors are allowed access for wildlife observation during daylight hours, with the exception of Doris Campground and certain night fishing opportunities. The only restrictions to observation occur during fall and winter permit hunts, when foot travel and vehicle travel on secondary roads is restricted.

d) How is the use conducted?

On this Refuge the activity can take form through a variety of means, including camping, fishing, hiking, jogging, hunting, interpretation, boating, bicycling, picnicking, rock climbing, scuba diving, and photography. The Refuge is also proposing to develop online observation tools and tips to aid in awareness of observation opportunities. Visitors can benefit from wildlife observation by gaining an understanding of the interrelationships between humans and animals. Each of these individual recreational uses of the Refuge is evaluated in its own Compatibility Determination.

Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for the purpose of wildlife observation or photography and charge a fee or tuition for their service are required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge. These commercial activities are covered under a separate Compatibility Determination.

e) Why is this use being proposed?

The goal of the Wildlife Observation Program is to offer a variety of high quality opportunities for the public to observe wildlife in their native habitats, while minimizing potential conflict between humans and wildlife, or between user groups. The

Interpretation Program supports and facilitates the Wildlife Observation Program by offering pertinent natural history and management information.

Availability of Resources:

The Refuge estimates an average of 1.5 million wildlife observation visits per year (USFWS 2009). The Refuge uses a large portion of their staff and budget resources to facilitate wildlife observation, which goes hand-in-hand with photography opportunities. Both programs require oversight by visitor services, law enforcement, and maintenance staff. In association with these two uses, Refuge staff make visitor contacts at the Visitor Center, provide information to visitors through the Trail Ranger system, maintain and improve existing facilities, and monitor the uses. Law enforcement staff patrols roads, pullouts, and parking areas, mainly enforcing regulations regarding speed limits, illicit substance use or possession, occasional vehicle theft, and vandalism.

Continuing, enhancing, or adding to the existing photography and wildlife observation programs will be considered through Projects 23b and 25a of the CCP. Project 23b proposes to improve the management and delivery of the photography/observation program, and Project 25a proposes to improve photography/observation infrastructure. The estimated start-up cost for improved program management and infrastructure development is \$993,000, with an annual operating and maintenance cost of \$41,200. These estimated figures will assist the Refuge in adequately funding both overall projects and to improve facilities and opportunities that assist all six of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses allowed on the Refuge.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Short- and Long-term Impacts:

The use of roadways and trails to facilitate wildlife observation may result in some environmental impacts to the Refuge, its habitat, and wildlife species. Vehicles travelling Refuge roads for wildlife viewing purposes may result in emissions that could negatively impact air quality. Human activity throughout wildlife habitat will continue to result in some temporary disturbance to wildlife. In addition, the use of trails may result in soil compaction, erosion, trampling of vegetation, and production of litter or human waste. These impacts have a low potential of leading water quality degradation in waterbodies near trails. Visitor access, however, is typically by individuals or groups that participate in recreational activities for short durations. The Refuge will continue to encourage the use of designated roads and trails where facilities exist specifically to accommodate the use while reducing resource impacts. The additional trails proposed in the CCP would increase the area where resource impacts occur while simultaneously decreasing the density of those impacts overall. Therefore, destruction or negative impacts to habitat and associated vegetation are minor.

Alternatively, wildlife observation may result in long-term beneficial impacts to the human environment. This use may increase the viewers' understanding and appreciation of wildlife and their habitat needs as well as the role of the National Wildlife Refuge System in resource conservation. The additional wildlife observation facilities will offer increased opportunities for the public to view wildlife in a variety of habitats occurring on the Refuge while enhancing the overall Refuge System mission.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated adverse cumulative impacts resulting from wildlife observation. Ultimately, this activity will add to public use opportunities on the Refuge, which, in combination,

will result in beneficial cumulative impacts on the human environment. The wide variety of public use opportunities available on the Refuge will increase public awareness about conservation issues and the National Wildlife Refuge System. This will benefit the Service's overall mission and the Refuge purpose.

Public Review and Comment:

During public scoping for the preparation of the CCP, verbal and written comments were solicited from members of the general public on all aspects of current management through public meetings, special mailings, and local media outlets. The Service is distributing this Draft CD for public review as part of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment. The public is encouraged to provide comments on the proposed use by September 8, 2012.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The Refuge will implement the following stipulations to ensure that wildlife observation remains a compatible use:

1. Temporary access restrictions may be used to protect sensitive resources from harassment.
2. The Refuge prohibits night access to the entire Refuge with the exception of Doris Campground, main roads, and night fishing.
3. The Refuge prohibits foot and vehicle travel on trails and secondary roads during fall and winter permit hunts.
4. The Refuge will limit and control Refuge access through enforcement of Refuge regulations, signage, and education of the public as to the purpose of the Refuge and responsibilities of visitors.
5. Individuals or organizations that bring clients to the Refuge for the purpose of wildlife observation or photography and charge a fee or tuition for their service are required to have a Special Use Permit issued by the Refuge. This requirement ensures that private businesses are not unfairly making a profit from public lands and provides a mechanism for the Refuge to regulate where and when commercial activities occur.

Justification:

As defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, wildlife-dependent recreational uses may be authorized on a refuge when they are compatible and not inconsistent with public safety. Wildlife observation is included as one of these six activities, which are to receive enhanced and priority consideration in Refuge planning and management. Regulated wildlife observation as described here and consistent with the management direction provided in the CCP will provide the visitor with a chance to experience wildlife firsthand and develop knowledge about species' behaviors, adaptations, and habitat requirements while also developing an understanding of the refuge's role in wildlife and habitat conservation through the National

Wildlife Refuge System. This activity will not conflict with any of the other priority public uses or adversely impact biological resources. Therefore, through the Compatibility Determination process, Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has determined that wildlife observation, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the Refuge.

Signature: Refuge Manager _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 15-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2027

References Cited:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2009. Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Unpublished Data.