

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Research

Refuge Name: Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Executive Order 7583 on March 23, 1937, Migratory Bird Conservation Act, Refuge Administration Act.

Refuge Purpose(s):

"... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife." Executive Order 7583, dated March 23, 1937.

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

"... conservation, management, and ... 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 ..." 16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act).

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission: The mission 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:

What is the use? Research projects conducted by institutions such as the University of North Dakota., South Dakota State University, St. Cloud State, Bemidji State, University of Minnesota, University of Massachusetts, Utah State University, and other academic institutions; government agencies such as the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Tribal Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); and private conservation organizations such as Society of Tympanuchus Pinnatus and The Nature Conservancy. Research projects will contribute to a better understanding of refuge wildlife and habitat resources, provide information to improve adaptive management decisions, and increase life history information on species of concern.

Written research proposals will be required for review and approval before access will be allowed. If approved, access to refuge lands and waters will be limited to the least invasive means required to accomplish the activities.

Research will be carried out by professors, students, contractors, and refuge staff and volunteers. Research results will be used to assist refuge staff in making wise management decisions and to support adaptive management processes.

Where is the use conducted? Within the Agassiz NWR (61,500 acres) and often on adjoining state lands (20,000 acres) or nearby Red Lake Band of the Chippewa Reservation under cooperative agreements with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources of the Red Lake Band DNR.

How is the use conducted? Research may be conducted by foot, vehicle, canoe, kayak, airboat, and aerial methods. Marking of nests and individual animals may be required. The least invasive means required to accomplish objectives will be used.

When would the use be conducted? Research projects may be conducted year round but usually occur from April to November.

Availability of Resources:

Some research and monitoring is funded by grants, other government agencies, universities, or done by students and volunteers. Refuge staff involvement includes reviewing research proposals, supervising or monitoring research activities, reviewing reports, providing some equipment and vehicles, and occasionally participating in field work. Staff time for development and/or review of research proposals/reports, administration of Special Use Permits, supervision of students and volunteers, maintenance of vehicles, specialized equipment and bunkhouse is already available and committed.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Research projects will be evaluated to determine whether the project is aligned with information needs of the refuge and surrounding landscape. Only projects that benefit resource management will be approved to receive a permit or cooperative agreement.

Disturbance or removal of plants and wildlife would be a temporary impact. Repopulation of the removed individuals would be expected to occur over time. Some temporary dispersal of animals around or off the refuge may occur from field activities.

Permit/Cooperative Agreements will be developed to eliminate or minimize impacts to other uses and management activities. Information collected from research project will assist the refuge manager in fine tuning management activities to maximize productivity of refuge lands.

Public Review and Comment:

Dates: 8-17-15 to 8-31-15

Determination:

_____ Use in not compatible.

_____ Use is compatible with the following stipulations.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

To ensure compatibility with National Wildlife Refuge System and Agassiz NWR goals and objectives the activity can only occur under the following stipulations:

1. Researchers will submit a study proposal and designate specific area(s) on the refuge where activity is to occur.
2. Each project will be evaluated on its merits. All proposals will be reviewed for their potential benefits to future refuge management activities and potential impact(s) to current activities.
3. Permits/Cooperative Agreements will only be issued to those projects which contribute to inventory, monitoring, management impacts, life history needs on species of concern and information needs of the refuge.
4. Coordination will be maintained with the Regional Refuge Wildlife Biologist.
5. A report must be submitted at the end of each field season and at the conclusion of the study.
6. Annually all ongoing activities and operations will be reviewed to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and policies.

Justification:

