

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Dog Exercising and Training

Refuge Name: Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge (Refuge).

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: The Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge was established by Public Law No. 268, 68th Congress on June 7, 1924. This act authorized acquisition of lands for Refuge purposes. Additional lands acquired in fee title by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are managed as part of the Refuge under a 1963 Cooperative Agreement between the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior.

Refuge Purpose(s): “The Refuge shall be established and maintained (a) as a refuge and breeding place for migratory birds included in the terms of the convention between the United States and Great Britain for the protection of migratory birds, concluded August 16, 1916, and (b) to such extent as the Secretary of the Interior by regulations, prescribe, as a refuge and breeding place for other wild birds, game animals, fur-bearing animals, and for the conservation of wild flowers and aquatic plants, and (c) to such extent as the Secretary of the Interior may, by regulations, prescribe a refuge and breeding place for fish and other aquatic animal life.”

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission: “The mission of the National Wildlife 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:

What is the use? This use involves the exercising or training of dogs on the Refuge under a specific regulation that protects wildlife and the public.

Where is the use conducted? The use occurs sporadically throughout the Refuge, but is most common near cities and communities with higher densities of dog owners. Perhaps half of this use would involve people camping on islands with dogs, and half would be persons working or training hunting retrievers from shoreline areas.

When is the use conducted? The use occurs year-around, with the highest frequency during the summer months.

How is the use conducted? The use does not include field trials or commercial/professional dog training, which remains prohibited.

Why is this use being proposed? Exercising or training of dogs on the Refuge is common.

Availability of Resources: This use does not require additional facilities or added maintenance of existing facilities. Enforcement of regulations governing this use is part of normal law enforcement operations. Thus, no additional resources are needed to administer this use.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Domestic animals can harass and lull wildlife and be particularly harmful to ground nesting birds during the nesting season. Some animals, particularly dogs, can at times

become a direct or perceived threat to other persons engaged in recreation on the Refuge. Young children especially can be easily frightened by dogs, and even knocked down and injured by overly friendly dogs. Domestic animals often leave waste at public use sites which many visitors find objectionable.

Public Review and Comment: This Compatibility Determination is a re-evaluation of an existing determination which was included in the Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) released May 1, 2005 for a 120-day comment period. It was also available during a subsequent 90-day review period on a supplement to the EIS released December 3, 2005. Public notification included notices in the Federal Register, media announcements, and 31 public meetings and workshops attended by more than 3,700 persons. Several comments on regulations pertaining to dogs were received and are found in Chapter 7 of the EIS, with a Service response. However, no comments specific to this determination were received.

A draft of this re-evaluation was released on August 5, 2016 for a 30-day comment period. Public notification of the availability of this CD included media announcements and posting on the Refuge's website.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: Dogs may be used for hunting in accordance with State regulations. When dogs are not actively engaged in authorized hunting activities, the Refuge has the following regulations related to dogs: "No dogs are allowed to disturb or endanger wildlife or people while on the Refuge. All dogs while on the Refuge must be under the control of their owners/handlers at all times or on a leash. No dogs are allowed to roam. All dogs must be on a leash when on hiking trails or other areas so posted. Working a dog in Refuge waters by tossing a retrieval dummy or other object for out-and-back exercise is allowed. Owners/handlers of dogs are also responsible for disposal of dog droppings on Refuge public use concentration areas such as trails, sandbars, and boat landings. Field trials or commercial/professional dog training activities are prohibited."

Justification: The Refuge use for dog exercising and training is more relaxed than the current Refuge System regulations, which prohibit unconfined domestic animals on national wildlife refuges. The stipulations allow dogs to be free and would allow owners to exercise and train their dogs, but helps protect wildlife and other persons from disturbance or injury. Disturbance to wildlife should thus not be greater than the multitude of other uses occurring during the same time period. The stipulations also help safeguard other visitors from the real or perceived threat that dogs can pose by ensuring they are physically restrained at Refuge public use facilities. The prohibition of field trials and commercial or organized dog training would remain in effect and is long-standing Refuge policy. With the stipulations, this use is not expected to materially interfere with or detract from the purposes of the Refuge or the mission of the Refuge System.

Refuge Manager: _____
Signature Date

Regional Chief Concurrence: _____
Regional Chief Date

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2026