

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

USE: Non-Refuge Sponsored Special Events

REFUGE NAME: Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge

ESTABLISHING AND ACQUISITION AUTHORITY(IES): Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge was established by Executive Order 7437, dated August 21, 1936.

REFUGE PURPOSE(S): The purposes come from the authority under which Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge was established and from authorities under which subsequent major land additions to the Refuge were made. Purposes for Trempealeau NWR are:

" ... a Refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife"
(Executive Order 7437, dated August 21, 1936)

"suitable for-(1) incidental fish and wildlife oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species... " (Refuge Recreation Act(16 U.S.C 460k-460k-4), as amended)

" ... for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources." (6 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4)(Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956.)

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM MISSION: "...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? The Refuge would allow special events sponsored by charitable and other non-profit clubs or groups.

Where is the use conducted? Potential participants, numbering 2-400, may use established roads, trails, and boat landings that are already open to the public. Clean-up events may include all portions of the Refuge, such as shorelines, trails, and some areas accessible by boat where debris is deposited.

When is the use conducted? Events may be held one to five times, annually, and can occur at different times throughout the year.

How is the use conducted? These special events may include walks, education jamborees, fishing derby's, and clean up events, as well as bicycle rides or runs. Participants in clean-ups generally work on shoreline areas or seasonally flooded bottomlands where debris is deposited.

Why is the use being proposed? The Refuge provides a scenic backdrop for many communities. Charitable and non-profit groups within these communities frequently request the use of the Refuge for various events. Some of these groups place a high value on the Refuge and volunteer time and services to assist the Refuge with maintaining the scenic qualities and beauty of the Refuge.

AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES:

These events generally involve staff time for meeting with sponsors, explaining Refuge regulations, issuing a Special Use Permit, and providing some level of oversight during some or the entire event. Law Enforcement personnel may be needed to monitor the activity or address issues with the visiting public in the area of the activity. Existing staff are adequate to administer this use. Events are limited to 12 requests per year. The refuge manager has the right to decline events that would demand additional resources and staff availability due to event size and scope. Since events may be held or based on existing roads, trails, or landings, facilities are deemed adequate. Sponsors are required to furnish any additional facilities needed, such as portable toilets.

- Special equipment, facilities, or improvements necessary to support the use: funded through regular management activities, no additional funding is needed.
- Maintenance costs: funded through regular management activities, no additional funding is needed.
- Monitoring costs: staff may monitor commercial recorders to ensure compliance. This is expected to be covered by the refuge's current funding capacity, no additional funding is needed.
- Offsetting revenues: none

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS OF THE USE:

Short and Long-term Impacts:

The short-term impact associated with these events is human disturbance to wildlife occupying habitat on the Refuge. Most events occur on established trails or areas that already support a moderate level of human activity. Wildlife that occupy habitat in these areas are accustomed to a certain degree of human disturbance. Any alteration of behavior or bird flight would be temporary and localized with wildlife quickly resuming normal activities.

There may be some short-term impact to other visitors engaged in wildlife-dependent recreation during the event. Visitors not engaged in the event should be permitted to continue their activity. With an increase of public use during walks or runs, an increase of litter is expected. Event coordinators will be required to clean the area when the event is complete. Clean-up events may

actually reduce litter and debris and thus have a positive impact on the visual character of the Refuge.

Other than the potential for some increase in future visitation to the Refuge, no long-term impacts associated with these events are anticipated.

Indirect and Cumulative Impacts:

Indirect effects of a third party special event could lead to non-traditional refuge visitors and tourism. It is unlikely that this tourism would have major effects on the local economy, however, there is a possibility of economic benefit to local businesses. Little or no cumulative impacts to wildlife and habitat are anticipated.

PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT:

The draft Compatibility Determination will be available for public review and comment for 15 days from August 31st, 2020 to September 15th, 2020. A public notice will be sent to local newspapers, as well as a press release, on August 31st, 2020 notifying the public of the comment period. The compatibility determination will be made available online at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/trempealeau/>. You can contact the refuge at 608-539-2311 x. 6 or Stephanie_edeler@fws.gov to request either printed or electronic copies. Please let us know if you need the documents in an alternative format. Concerns expressed during the public comment period will be addressed in the final draft.

DETERMINATION:

- Use is not compatible
- Use is compatible with the following stipulations

STIPULATIONS NECESSARY TO ENSURE COMPATIBILITY:

1. Events must include an interpretive or educational message that helps further the understanding of the purposes of the Refuge and the mission of the Refuge System.
2. Event sponsors will furnish complete information including event description, date, time, preferred location, number of participants, and logistics for health and safety, so that the manager can make a determination of best area and timing of events when issuing a Special Use Permit. Management reserves the right to deny any proposal that will cause an undue demand on staff or resources and is not related to a charitable or non-profit organization.
3. A permit fee will be necessary for events requiring greater than one hour staff time to administer and process the permit.
4. Except for clean-ups, events will be scheduled only in areas open to public use. Events will be scheduled at appropriate times of the year to avoid significant wildlife and visitor disturbance. Events will be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis, with no more than one event in the same area and time. All activities will be limited to the designated routes on established trails.

5. Fundraising (collection of money) is not allowed on Refuge property.
6. Water or rest stations will be approved by Refuge staff in advance of the event and will be located to avoid any sensitive sites (e.g. areas with high densities of foraging shorebirds, areas where waterbirds, waterfowl, raptors or passerines are nesting, etc.) and to minimize disturbance to wildlife foraging/perching/loafing in adjacent wetlands and woodlands as well as undue disturbance to other Refuge users.
7. Event sponsors will be required to set up and remove all materials necessary for the event. This requirement applies to any tables, chairs, displays, signs, traffic aids, litter receptacles, portable toilets, etc. needed.
8. Event sponsors will be required to adhere to all special conditions in the Special Use Permit including, insurance, emergency responders, cleanup, and fees. Failure to comply will result in the loss of event privileges for the following year and possibly the loss of all future special event privileges per the refuge manager's discretion.

JUSTIFICATION:

This use will not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes for which the Refuge was established with the above stipulations in place. Disturbance to wildlife and habitat will be minimal since this use will occur on existing roads and trails (cleanups excepted), be periodic, and of relatively short duration. Cleanups may happen off roads and trails causing minimal disturbance, but will reduce litter and debris thus having a positive impact on wildlife. Wildlife disturbed will be displaced during the event, but should return to the areas affected quickly. Adjacent habitat is abundant for wildlife to use when disturbed. Stipulations in place will minimize disturbance, ensure control of the events, and contribute to the mission of the Refuge System by requiring an interpretive or environmental education component. This use will also expose large numbers of people, including new audiences, to the Refuge and help them gain a better understanding and appreciation of the Refuge. The number of events, and their size and scope, remains under the control of refuge managers through the requirement of a Special Use Permit.

SIGNATURE:

Refuge Manager Signature and Date

CONCURRENCE:

Regional Refuge Chief Signature and Date

Mandatory 10 or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2030