Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge
Big and Upland Game and Feral Hog Hunt Plan (Updated to Include Wild Turkey)

May 2019

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge
107993 S. 4520 Road
Vian, OK 74962

Submitted By:
Refuge Manager

________________________  __________
Signature     Date

Concurrence:
Refuge Supervisor

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Signature     Date

Approved:
Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

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Signature     Date
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I. Introduction

National wildlife refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), the purposes of an individual refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy, and laws and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

The Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge (SNWR, NWR, or refuge) is an overlay project of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) established on the 42,000-acre Robert S. Kerr Reservoir by Cooperative Agreement No. DACW56-3-71 on December 11, 1970, to “…be administered by him [Secretary of the Interior] directly or in accordance with cooperative agreements…and in accordance with such rules and regulations for the conservation, maintenance, and management of wildlife, resources thereof, and its habitat thereon…” 16 U.S.C. 664 (Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act).

The primary purpose of the refuge is to provide sanctuary and breeding ground habitat for migratory waterfowl and other wildlife species in addition to providing wildlife-dependent recreational activities for the visiting public.

Refuge staff completed a Big and Upland Game and Feral Hog Hunt Plan in 2017 to provide new public hunting opportunities for white-tailed deer, upland game, and the incidental take of feral hogs during designated hunting seasons. This plan was approved in November 2017. We are now updating the plan to include the hunting of wild turkey. This plan precedes the overall 2017 Hunt plan. The 2017 Big and Upland Game and Feral Hog Hunt Plan opened seven additional hunt units (Girty, Webber, Vian Creek, Possum Hollow, Shelby, Delta Island, and Haskell) to big game (white-tailed deer). One additional unit was opened for upland game (squirrel and rabbit) along with the method of take to include rimfire rifles. The incidental take of feral hog was also opened in all nine hunt units. These same nine units (Sandtown Bottom, Cook, Girty, Webber, Vian Creek, Possum Hollow, Shelby, Delta Island, and Haskell) will be opened to allow wild turkey hunting. In addition, the incidental take of feral hog during the wild turkey hunts will be allowed in all nine hunt units. For the purposes of this plan, wild turkey (Melleagris gallopavo) is considered a big game animal along with white-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus). Eastern gray squirrel (Sciurus carolinensis), fox squirrel (S. niger), swamp rabbit (Sylvilagus aquaticus), and eastern cottontail rabbit (S. floridanus) are considered upland game. Feral hog (Sus scrofa) is considered an invasive animal in this plan.

The refuge is located in Sequoyah, Haskell, and Muskogee Counties in Oklahoma, a few miles south of Vian, Oklahoma (Figure 1). Strategically situated at the confluence of the Canadian and Arkansas Rivers, the refuge is a valuable sanctuary containing rich river-bottomland forests with numerous ponds and sloughs that provide food and cover for migratory and resident wildlife species. The distinct landscape, diversity of biological communities, and secluded location are inherent characteristics that contribute to the area’s value as a natural preserve. The refuge provides a variety of protected habitats for wildlife, open space, and nature-oriented recreational activities for the public.
This eastern section of Oklahoma has historically been a prime waterfowl migration and use area located in the Central Flyway. The Arkansas River and surrounding lands provide ample water, food, and habitat that attract thousands of migrating waterfowl each year. Today, the refuge continues to offer sanctuary to migratory waterfowl in the fall, winter, and spring. The refuge’s land and water restoration activities are designed and implemented to improve waterfowl habitat and to benefit more than 272 species of birds, 46 species of mammals, 94 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 73 species of fish. While the primary challenges on the refuge have centered on conservation and management of habitat for migrating birds and other native wildlife species, the refuge also conserves and manages habitat for federally listed threatened and endangered species and several species of concern, including the American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus germanicus*) and interior least tern (*Sterna antillarum*).

Located in the heart of a rural community, the refuge receives increasing influences from the nearby urban areas of Muskogee, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City to the west and Ft. Smith and Little Rock to the east. The refuge was established on the upper end of the Robert S. Kerr Reservoir in eastern Oklahoma and overlaps the junction of Sequoyah, Muskogee, and Haskell Counties. The refuge headquarters is located 3 miles south of the Vian exit on Interstate 40 (I-40), 35 miles west of Fort Smith, Arkansas, and approximately 150 miles east of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Other refuges in proximity to the refuge include Ozark Plateau NWR approximately 45 miles to the north, Deep Fork NWR approximately 70 miles to the west, and Little River NWR approximately 120 miles to the south.

The mission of the NWRS, as outlined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSAA), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), is to:

“... 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.”

The NWRSAA mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the System to (16 U.S.C. 668dd (a)(4):
- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the NWRS;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the NWRS are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the NWRS described at 16 U.S.C. 668dd (a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;
- Ensure effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the States in which the units of the NWRS are located;
- Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of each refuge;
- Recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the NWRS through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
• Ensure that opportunities are provided within the NWRS for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and
• Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

Therefore, it is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established and the mission of the NWRS.

Figure 1. Map of Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge

Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge opened to hunting soon after its establishment date of December 11, 1970. The refuge operated under an Interim Plan in 1971 with revisions in 1972. The types of species hunted at the time were bobwhite quail, coot, squirrel, rabbit, goose, and duck. A comprehensive hunt plan was written in April 1973. Quail hunting is no longer allowed on the refuge due to low numbers. A revised hunt plan was issued in May 1988 to restrict hunt days to Saturdays, Sundays, Mondays, and Tuesdays. An opening package with a hunt plan for white-tailed deer was completed in May 1996. In 2017, an opening package was completed for the hunting of big game (white-tailed deer), upland game (rabbit and squirrel), and feral hog that added new areas to be hunted and included the incidental take of feral hog.
II. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of implementing a big game, upland game, and feral hog hunting program on Sequoyah NWR are to:

- Provide the public with additional recreational experiences on refuge lands.
- Educate the public about the benefits of the use of hunting as a wildlife management tool.
- Preserve biological diversity by reducing or eliminating the negative environmental impacts associated with feral hogs and white-tailed deer overpopulation.
- Improve white-tailed deer herd health.
- Provide opportunities to address the nationwide decline in the participation of hunting activities. Opportunities will focus on the “R3”, which means “Recruitment” of new hunters, “Retention” of existing hunters, and “Reactivation” of people that used to hunt.
- Expand hunting opportunities on public lands to align with Secretarial Order 3356 (Hunting, Fishing, Recreational Shooting, and Wildlife Conservation Opportunities and Coordination with States, Tribes, and Territories).

III. Description of Hunting Program

The refuge hunting program is designed to provide quality hunting opportunities, while minimizing conflicts with non-hunting user groups.

A. Areas to be Opened to Hunting.

The Arkansas River separates two management areas on the refuge. The units listed below will be open to white-tailed deer, wild turkey, rabbit, squirrel, and feral hog hunting on the refuge (Table 1 and Figure 2). Turkey permits (up to 10) will be issued each season and units selected for hunting will be based on the location and number of turkeys in the nine units listed in the table below. The number of permits issued beyond 10 will be contingent upon a new turkey population survey conducted by the refuge in coordination with the State and completion of appropriate NEPA documentation and hunt plan update. For these reasons, turkey is not included in Table 1.
Figure 2. Hunt units for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, rabbits, squirrels, and feral hog hunts at Sequoyah NWR

Hunt Units for SNWR Hunt Program:

Sandtown Bottom Hunt Unit (4,248 acres):

This unit is located south/southwest of refuge headquarters and receives a steady concentration of public use. This unit contains an auto tour route, which showcases wildlife/habitat, provides hunter/fisherman access, and allows opportunities for interpretation, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education activities. This unit (beyond Tuff Boat Ramp) includes a waterfowl sanctuary that is closed to all public entry (except for vehicle traffic) from September 1st to March 31st. During the big game hunts, deer hunting is allowed in the waterfowl sanctuary and this plan proposes also allowing turkey hunting in the waterfowl sanctuary. Within this important multi-use area, the refuge staff implements intensive management prescriptions, providing for both wildlife and public use. This hunt unit includes Armstrong Dike, Sally Jones Lake, Willow Slough Complex, and the Upper/Lower Scarborough, which are mechanically pumped to provide wetland habitats for waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and invertebrates. Both cropland and natural vegetation are flooded in Sandtown Bottom. Sally Jones Lake can be pumped down in order to stimulate desirable wetland vegetation.
**Cook Bottom Hunt Unit (882 acres):**
This unit is located on the north section of SNWR, and is set aside primarily for wildlife use and native habitat restoration. The Arkansas River flows around the most of this unit and will flood large portions when the USACE is releasing significant amounts of water from the Webbers Falls and Eufaula Dams. This unit is comprised primarily of cropland and bottomland hardwoods and is closed to public use except during big game hunts.

**Webbers Bottom Unit (1,216 acres):**
This unit is located on the northwest section of SNWR, directly across the Arkansas River from the Cook Bottom Unit. Dirty Creek serves as the southern border of this unit and frequent flooding occurs during wet periods. It is made up of cropland, bottomland hardwoods, and wetlands. It is open to public entry, except during muzzleloader deer hunts.

**Vian Creeks (1,449 acres):**
This portion of the refuge includes Big Vian and Little Vian Creeks as they drain into Robert S. Kerr Reservoir. These areas experience frequent flooding during heavy rain events and are directly connected to the main lake system as low order streams. The habitat along these creeks is primarily bottomland hardwoods. This unit is open to public entry except during muzzleloader deer hunts.

**Girty Bottom Unit (849 acres):**
This unit is located on the southwest section of SNWR, bordering the west bank of the Canadian River. This hunt unit exhibits light public use and is only accessible by foot. Frequent flooding occurs when large releases are made from the Eufaula Lake Dam. This unit is secluded from residential houses and is a considerable distance from the interstate highway. Previously farmed fields are now turning into early successional forests and they are bordered by late successional forests and forested wetlands.

**Shelby Bottom/Hi-saw Island Unit (837 acres):**
Shelby Bottom Unit is located on the south side of Dirty Creek, which serves as the border with the Webbers Bottom Unit. The habitat is much like the Webber Bottom Unit; however, this unit is closed to public access with the exception of deer hunters. Hi-saw Island is a small island on the far north part of the Delta Islands and is accessed by refuge staff through the Shelby Bottom Unit.

**Possum Hollow Unit (800 acres):**
This unit is located on the southwest section of SNWR and borders the north bank of the Canadian River and the south border of the Girty Bottom Unit. This unit is very secluded with a small number of rural homes around its border and is a considerable distance from the interstate highway. This unit is closed to public access with the exception of big game and upland game hunters. This unit consists of open fields of grass surrounded by large stands of bottomland hardwoods. Frequent flooding occurs when large water releases are made from Eufaula Dam.

**Delta Islands (1,380 acres):**
This unit consists of open water, islands, and riparian zones within the central section of SNWR. These islands are directly connected to the main lake system. The unit is open to
the public and use is at a moderate level. Although there is interior least tern nesting activity on the small islands near Stoney Point and other islands located outside the refuge boundary, there is no known interior least tern nesting activity on these islands.

**Haskell Bottom Unit (1,510 acres):**
This unit is located on the southern middle section of SNWR, bordering the south and east banks of the Canadian River and is one of the most secluded units listed in this plan. It is made up primarily of large stands of bottomland hardwoods that flood when large releases are made from Eufaula Dam. Public use is at a low level in this unit, mainly being used by big game hunters.

**Table 1.** Acreage, desired and maximum number of deer permits, and hunting status of white-tailed deer, rabbit, and squirrel in each hunt unit at Sequoyah NWR. Feral hog hunting would be incidental to all other hunting activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hunt Unit</th>
<th>Deer Hunting (Y/N)</th>
<th># of Deer Permits per Hunt</th>
<th>Max # of Deer Permits Issued per Hunt</th>
<th>Rabbit and Squirrel Hunting (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sandtown (4,248 ac)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>20–25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook (882 ac)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>6–10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vian Creeks (1,449 ac)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webbers (1,216 ac)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisaw/Shelby (837 ac)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>3–5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girty (849 ac)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possum Hollow (800 ac)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2–4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delta Islands (1,380 ac)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2–4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haskell (1,510 ac)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. Species to be Taken, Hunting Periods, Hunting Access, Fees**

**Big Game (White-tailed Deer and Wild Turkey)**

**Deer:**

**Muzzleloader**

**Hunting period:**
Hunts conducted for three to five days during October, November, and December. Muzzleloader hunts may occur simultaneously among hunt units, and will be limited to no more than 4 total hunts per hunt unit each season. Of the nine hunt units, typically six units will be hunted within a given year.
Access:
Vehicles are confined to public access roads and designated parking areas. Boat access will be allowed for Haskell and the Delta Islands hunt units. Horses are prohibited. Persons with disabilities (meeting Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC) qualifications for deer hunts with a non-ambulatory or motor vehicle permit issued by ODWC for a disability hunting license) will be provided special accommodations.

Fees:
The muzzleloader hunts (adult and youth) will be conducted with the State of Oklahoma conducting the draw and the refuge serving as host for the event. Hunters wishing to participate in one of the special draw hunts for deer must apply through the ODWC website (www.wildlifedepartment.com). The ODWC is responsible for handling all applications and conducting the draws and collecting fees. Hunters are notified by ODWC that they have been selected for one of the hunts and a complete package with permits and instructions are sent to the hunters. Persons with disabilities (meeting ODWC qualifications for deer hunts with a non-ambulatory or motor vehicle permit issued by ODWC for a disability hunting license) will be provided special accommodations.

Archery Hunt
Hunting Period:
Archery hunts are conducted four to seven days in October, November, and December. Archery hunts may occur simultaneously among hunt units and will be limited to no more than two total hunts per hunt unit each season.

Access:
Vehicles are confined to public access roads and designated parking areas. Boat access will be allowed for Haskell and the Delta Islands Units. Horses are prohibited. Persons with disabilities (meeting ODWC qualifications for deer hunts with a non-ambulatory or motor vehicle permit issued by ODWC for a disability hunting license) will be provided special accommodations.

Fees:
The archery hunts (adult) will be conducted with the State of Oklahoma conducting the draw and the refuge serving as host for the event. Hunters wishing to participate in one of the special draw hunts for deer must apply through ODWC website (www.wildlifedepartment.com). The ODWC is responsible for handling all applications and conducting the draws and collecting fees. Hunters are notified by ODWC that they have been selected.

Wild Turkey:
Shotgun and Archery
Hunting Period:
Shotguns with non-toxic shot capable of holding no more than three shells may be used. Archery equipment recognized as legal by the ODWC may be used. Hunts will be
conducted as controlled hunts for two to ten days during the State of Oklahoma spring turkey season. The refuge will conduct two hunts, one youth hunt and one adult hunt.

Access:
Vehicles are confined to public access roads and designated parking areas. Boat access will be allowed for Haskell and the Delta Islands Units. Horses are prohibited. Persons with disabilities (meeting ODWC qualifications with a non-ambulatory or motor vehicle permit issued by ODWC for a disability hunting license) will be provided special accommodations.

Fees:
The wild turkey hunts will be conducted with the State of Oklahoma conducting the draw and the refuge serving as host for the event. Hunters wishing to participate in one of the special draw hunts for wild turkey must apply through the ODWC website (www.wildlifedepartment.com). The ODWC is responsible for handling all applications and conducting the draws and collecting fees. Hunters are notified by ODWC that they have been selected for one of the hunts and a complete package with permits and instructions are sent to the hunters. Persons with disabilities (meeting ODWC qualifications with a non-ambulatory or motor vehicle permit issued by ODWC for a disability hunting license) will be provided special accommodations. When the refuge participates in the Oklahoma Youth Hunting Program, youth selected through this program would not have to pay a fee.

Feral Hog:
There are no hunting programs specifically for taking feral hogs. This plan only provides for the incidental take of feral hogs by the general public during established hunting seasons for other species (e.g., big game and upland game).

Upland Game (Rabbit and Squirrel)

Hunting Period:
Rabbit – open December 1st - January 31st – Saturday through Tuesday
Squirrel – open in September, December and January, Saturday through Tuesday.

Access:
Vehicles are confined to public access roads and designated parking areas.

Fees:
No fees are required for this hunt.

Method of take:
17/22 rimfire rifle and shotguns.
C. Hunter Permit Requirements

**Big Game:**
Hunters wishing to participate in one of the special draw hunts for deer or wild turkey must apply through the ODWC website (www.wildlifedepartment.com). ODWC is responsible for handling all applications and conducting the draws. Hunters are notified by ODWC that they have been selected for one of the hunts and a complete package with permits and instructions are sent to the hunters. The draw system for the white-tailed deer hunts allows the refuge to better manage these hunts to benefit the overall health of the deer herd. The draw system for the deer and wild turkey hunts enables the refuge to provide high-quality hunting experience for the individuals that are selected. The number of hunters participating on any given hunt can be limited and the season lengths can also be limited. The refuge does not require a refuge permit. However, a state controlled hunt permit is required.

**Upland Game:**
Hunters that participate in upland game hunting are required to obtain and carry a signed annual hunt brochure. The brochures are free of charge and available at the refuge headquarters, kiosks at entry points of the refuge, and the SNWR website (http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Sequoyah/). The refuge is ensuring that all hunters have read and understand all hunting regulations and also have the hunting map before they begin hunting. This also facilitates compliance with refuge regulations and promotes communication between refuge law enforcement and hunters.

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

The hunting program will be reviewed on an annual basis by refuge staff in consultation with ODWC. Necessary changes and/or modifications to the hunt will be incorporated if populations, habitat, or hunter success rates significantly change or affect wildlife populations. The contents of the 2017 Big and Upland Game and Feral Hog Plan were formally discussed with an ODWC senior biologist on October 19, 2015 during a meeting at the SNWR headquarters. A concurrence letter describing the proposed hunts for the 2017 plan was sent to ODWC in June 2016. A response in support of the proposal was received July 13, 2016.

The proposal to modify the Big and Upland Game and Feral Hog Plan to include turkey hunting was presented to the ODWC at a hunt meeting on January 31, 2018. Additional informal discussions with an ODWC senior biologist occurred following the ODWC hunt meeting. A formal concurrence letter has not yet been sent to the ODWC.

E. Law Enforcement

Sequoyah NWR currently has one full-time law enforcement officer. This officer, along with two State game wardens assigned to Sequoyah County, three in Muskogee County, and two in Haskell County will enforce State/Federal regulations and refuge specific laws and rules.

All applicable State and Federal regulations will be enforced, along with refuge specific regulations. Law enforcement efforts will include field compliance checks for licenses, permits, legal means and methods, and legal equipment. Officers will also frequently work the hunter check station to enforce compliance.
The following methods will be used to control and enforce hunting regulations:

- Refuge and hunt area boundaries will be clearly posted;
- The refuge will provide a brochure that shows hunt areas;
- Service law enforcement staff will randomly check hunters for compliance with Federal and State laws as well as refuge-specific regulations pertinent to the hunt, including compatibility stipulations;
- Service law enforcement staff will coordinate with ODWC and other law enforcement agencies for all hunting on the refuge, and information will be made available at the refuge headquarters and visitor center; and
- A briefing for hunters in the controlled deer hunts and wild turkey hunts is conducted prior to each hunt. Refuge law enforcement reviews the rules and regulations with the hunters during these meetings.

F. Funding and Staffing Requirements

The annual costs for the hunting program is anticipated to be paid by the law enforcement program (1264), visitor services program (1263), maintenance program (1262), and general station funds (1261). The hunting program for the refuge is already established for deer, squirrel, rabbit and feral hog. The update of this plan will add wild turkey to the list of species to be hunted on the refuge. The addition of this species to the hunting program will create in increase in the administrative cost to the refuge hunting program. It is estimated that the hunt program’s annual cost will be $12,150. Hunters participating in the deer and wild turkey hunts pay a $20 federal user fee to the ODWC. ODWC pays the refuge 100 percent of the money that is collected in this process. The refuge submits the fees to the recreational fee program and receives 80 percent of the funds in return. The refuge uses these recreational fee funds to pay salaries of staff that perform work on these hunts and to purchase any needed materials that are associated with the hunting program.

Staffing is the most significant limiting factor for conducting the refuge hunting program. One law enforcement officer is tasked with addressing all enforcement needs of the public use program throughout the 20,800 acres of the refuge. The outdoor recreation planner administers all projects associated with wildlife observation, wildlife photography, hunting, fishing, environmental education, and interpretation. Volunteers are often used to enhance the public use programs provided by the refuge. All other refuge staff provides some support for public use programs such as hunting.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Expense Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<td>Staff salaries</td>
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<td>Road/parking lot rehab</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$12,150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. Conduct of the Hunt

The conduct of the hunt is guided by refuge-specific hunting regulations as outlined in the 50 CFR.

A. Hunter Application and Registration Procedures (if applicable)

Everyone participating in upland game hunting is required to obtain and carry with them an annual refuge hunting brochure for hunting. The permit is located on the annual hunting brochure. These permits are free of charge and obtained by simply visiting the refuge headquarters, various kiosks at refuge entrance points, or by printing one from the Sequoyah NWR website. http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Sequoyah/.

Hunters wishing to participate in one of the special draw hunts for deer or wild turkey must apply through the ODWC website. The site is www.wildlifedepartment.com. ODWC is responsible for handling all applications and conducting the draws. Hunters are notified by ODWC that they have been selected for one of the hunts and a complete package with permits and instructions are sent to the hunters. Youth hunters that are interested in wild turkey hunting on the refuge may also be selected through the Oklahoma Youth Hunting Program.

B. Refuge-specific Hunting Regulations

Listed below are the proposed changes to the refuge-specific regulations that pertain to Sequoyah NWR as of the date of this plan. These regulations may be modified as conditions change or if refuge expansion occurs. The following text is directly from the 50 CFR.

(e) Sequoyah National Wildlife Refuge

(2) Upland Game Hunting: We allow hunting of Eastern gray and fox squirrel and swamp and Eastern cottontail rabbit on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) The conditions set forth at paragraphs (e)(1)(i) through (e)(1) (viii) apply.

(ii) Season lengths and bag limits will be in accordance with State regulations with the exception that all upland game hunting will close on January 31 of each year.

(iii) We only allow legal shotguns. You must plug hunting shotguns so that they are incapable of holding more than three shells. We also allow .22/.17 rimfire rifles for hunting upland game.

(iv) The east portion of the Sandtown Bottom Unit and the portion of Robert S. Kerr Reservoir, from Tuff boat ramp to the confluence of Vian Creek, are designated as a Waterfowl sanctuary that is closed to all entry, except for the designated hiking trail, from September 1 through March 31. The closed area is marked with signs and buoys.
(3) Big Game Hunting: We allow hunting of white-tailed deer, wild turkey and feral hog on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) The conditions set forth at paragraphs (e)(1)(i) through (e)(1)(iii),(e)(1)(v) through(e)(1)(viii) apply.

(ii) We require a limited hunt permit (State issued) for controlled hunts for archery deer, and spring wild turkey hunts.

(iii) Incidental take of feral hogs may occur during deer hunts and wild turkey hunts.

C. Relevant State Regulations

• License and Permits – Unless exempt, all hunters must possess a valid State of Oklahoma hunting license and any State required stamps or tags. Deer and turkey hunters will receive an official letter and permit from ODWC stating that they have been drawn to participate in a hunt. Youth hunters participating in the Oklahoma Youth Hunting Program will be provided the necessary permits or permit exemption by the ODWC.

D. Other Refuge Rules and Regulations for Hunting

• Generally, all hunting will be in accordance with State regulations. Additional specific hunting regulations will be provided in refuge hunting brochure annually.

• Equipment – Muzzleloaders and bow and arrow will be allowed for white-tailed deer and feral hogs. Shotguns and rimfire rifles (.22/.17) may be used for upland game and feral hogs. Shotguns and archery equipment may be used for turkey hunting. For shotguns, only legal non-toxic shot is allowed and must be plugged and only capable of holding three shells. Baiting is prohibited for all species. We require upland game hunters to follow State blaze-orange regulations.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting Program

The refuge uses press releases to notify the public of upcoming hunting seasons and any special information that needs to be communicated. The Oklahoma hunting regulations book that is published each year contains information about the special draw hunts and instructions on how to apply. It also contains special regulations for upland game hunting on the refuge. Refuge specific information about the hunts is also available on the refuge hunt brochure for each year. Newspaper articles following the hunts are published in the Sequoyah County Times and the Vian-Tenkiller News about the achievements of the hunts and they give information for anyone interested in applying for a future hunt.
B. Anticipated Public Reaction to Hunting Program

Public scoping, for the 2017 hunt plan, was initiated on October 1, 2015 to request input from the public about the upcoming development of new units for white-tailed deer and upland game and adding feral hog to the big game and upland game hunting plan and EA. A public notice was produced and displayed at refuge headquarters and posted in towns throughout Sequoyah County. The refuge received one comment concerning the development of the 2017 plan: “As a hunter I would love to help preserve the habitat by thinning out the feral hogs, but during upland game hunting we only carry upland game load. I think the EA hunt plan should look into that and maybe even doing some controlled hunts for the hogs that would allow the hunters to carry something other than upland game load?”

Public scoping for this update to add turkey hunting was conducted on August 30, 2018. Similar to the public reaction to the 2017 Big and Upland Game and Feral Hog Hunt Plan; it is expected that the public will support a wild turkey hunt on the refuge.

C. How Hunters Will Be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations

General information regarding hunting and other public uses can be obtained at the refuge headquarters at 107993 S. 4520 Road, Vian, Oklahoma, or by calling (918)773-5251. Information on these activities can also be found on our website at: www.fws.gov/refuges/sequoyah.

VI. Compatibility Determination

A draft compatibility determination has been completed in conjunction with this hunt plan and the Environmental Assessment. Hunting and all associated program activities proposed in this plan are expected to be found compatible with the purposes of the refuge.
References


