

Compatibility Determination

Use: Outdoor Interpretive Amphitheater (Interpretation)

Refuge Name: Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Executive Order 7563 established Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge on February 27, 1937.

Refuge Purposes:

"... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ..." Executive Order 7563, dated Feb. 27, 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)

"... particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird management program." 16 U.S.C. § 667b (An Act Authorizing the Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife)

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:

Is the use a priority public use?

Interpretation is a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Where would the use be conducted?

The Outdoor Interpretive Amphitheater will be located near the Refuge Visitor Center. It will be located on the high ridge overlooking the Swan Lake impoundment just to the north of the Visitor Center. This is located outside of the area impacted by flooding.

When would the use be conducted?

The Outdoor Interpretive Amphitheater would be available for use year round but would primarily be used in the spring, summer, and fall months.

How would the use be conducted?

The Outdoor Interpretive Amphitheater would be used for presentations at refuge events and during school field trips.

Why is this use being proposed?

This use is being implemented to improve the refuges ability to carry out interpretive programs. At the current time we utilize bleachers that are on loan which requires us to

move them back in forth when the lender needs them. We often have 100 plus people that attend interpretive programs for refuge events so something is needed to address this need on a more permanent basis.

Availability of Resources:

Facilities and staff are currently available to provide access and maintain an Outdoor Interpretive Amphitheater. Most of the maintenance occurs during the summer months and will be conducted by the station YCC crew.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the wildlife observation overlook affect Refuge purposes and the NWRS mission?

The addition of an Outdoor Interpretive Amphitheater will not adversely affect Refuge purposes and will help fulfill the mission of the NWRS. The addition of this facility will enhance visitor use facilities and improve the quality of experience by refuge visitors and help people better appreciate the refuge's purpose.

How does the wildlife observation overlook affect Fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats; and the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the refuge/NWRS?

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

The cumulative disturbance caused by the addition of this facility is not expected to adversely affect fish and wildlife populations or their habitats. This facility will be located in an already existing use area, near the visitor center, and not expand uses beyond what is already impacted.

Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health

When conducted in accordance with Refuge regulations this use is not expected to adversely affect fish and wildlife populations or the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge as it is defined in Service policy (USFWS 2001).

Other Uses and Public Safety

The use of this facility is not expected to adversely affect other Refuge uses or public safety. As public use levels on Swan Lake NWR expand across time, unanticipated conflicts between user groups may occur. Experience on many National Wildlife Refuges has proven that time and space zoning (e.g., establishment of separate use areas, use periods, and restrictions on the number of users) is an effective tool in eliminating conflicts between user groups. This facility is a tool that will be utilized to better manage visitor services. Overall, the cumulative impact of this use on other wildlife-dependent recreation or public safety at Swan Lake NWR is expected to be minor.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was posted at the refuge for a 30-day comment period and disturbed through local media announcements. No comments were received.

Determination:

Wildlife Observation and Photography

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Ensure that access to the Outdoor Interpretive Amphitheater is accessible.

Justification:

This use has been determined compatible because the level of use is moderate and helps to consolidate uses to the developed public-use areas. The associated disturbance to wildlife is temporary and minor. Interpretation is a priority public use and provides visitors with opportunities to enjoy and learn about our lands and wildlife. This use also helps fulfill the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The use of a Outdoor Interpretive Amphitheater would not materially interfere with or detract from Refuge purposes.

Signature: Refuge Manager Steve White 11-10-11
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief Rick Scholtz 2/23/12
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-Evaluation Date: 2025