

## COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

**Use:** Research, Scientific Collecting, and Surveys by Third Parties

- Research: Planned, organized and systematic investigation of a scientific nature.
- Scientific collecting: Gathering of refuge natural resources or cultural artifacts for scientific purposes.
- Surveys: Scientific inventory or monitoring

**Refuge Name:** Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge

**Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):**

**Refuge Established:** August 1, 1958

**Refuge Authorities:** 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act); 16 U.S.C. § 460K-1 (Refuge Recreation Act)

**Refuge Purpose(s):**

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

“...suitable for – (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreation development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species...” 16 U.S.C. § 460K-1 (Refuge Recreation Act)

**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:** This Compatibility Determination updates and supersedes the Compatibility Determination developed concurrently with the refuge’s Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and authorized in 2004. This Compatibility Determination will provide for legitimate research needs and studies on lands and waters of the Clarence Cannon NWR.

Refuge staff receives periodic requests from non-Service entities (e.g. universities, state agencies, other federal agencies, nongovernmental organizations) to conduct research, scientific collecting, and surveys on the refuge. Research proposals are typically developed by the non-Service entities in support of refuge special needs or with refuge staff input into larger scale proposals that may utilize refuge lands and waters as a base of study. Other than staff review time, these research proposals and resultant studies are the responsibility and expense of the sponsoring school or group.

Studies vary from a few weeks to several months in duration (limited ones may develop over two or three years but these are exceptions), are quite labor intensive with several months after the field seasons devoted to refining data and publishing results. All of this accomplished with little or no direct involvement of refuge staff, or at most, modest staff times to review a manuscript.

Research studies, to be conducted on the refuge, must meet the criteria found in the refuge manual and the research outline/proposal must conform to FWS guidelines. Only those studies that provide practical management data or can be used to further the science of wildlife management are screened and approved.

The Service's Research and Management Studies (4 RM 6) and Appropriate Uses (603 FW1.10D(4)) policies indicate priority for scientific investigatory studies that contribute to the enhancement, protection, use, preservation and management of native wildlife populations and their habitats in their natural diversity. Projects that contribute to refuge-specific needs for resource and/or management goals and objectives will be given a higher priority over other requests.

**Availability of Resources:** Refuge staff responsibilities for projects by non-Service entities will be primarily limited to the following:

- Review of proposals
- Preparation of SUPs and other compliance documents (e.g. Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act)
- Monitoring of project implementation to ensure impacts and conflicts remain within acceptable levels (compatible) over time.

Additional administrative support, logistical and operational support may also be provided depending on each specific request. Facilities and staff are currently available to provide access, maintain roads, parking lots, secondary access roads, as well as to issue Special Use Permits for research, collecting and survey projects. Staff resources are deemed adequate to manage this use at anticipated levels.

**Anticipated Impacts of the Use:** Impacts on refuge purposes are all determined to be positive. Through properly applied research our "on the ground" management programs can benefit the resource with a minimum of wasted or misdirected effort. As we move into a more holistic, ecosystem-based management paradigm, the baseline data utilized in decision making must be sound and defensible; the research work will provide this key tool.

**Public Review and Comment:**

**Determination:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Use is Not Compatible

\_\_\_\_\_ Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

**Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:** The following stipulations are required to ensure compatibility:

1. Prior to conducting investigations, researchers will obtain SUPs from the refuge that make specific stipulations related to when, where, and how the research will be conducted. Managers retain the option to prohibit research on the refuge which does not contribute to the purposes of the refuge or the mission of the refuge system, or causes undue resource disturbance or harm.
2. Research applicants must submit a study plan to the Project Leader that includes:
  - a. Justification and objectives of the study
  - b. Relevance to resource management
  - c. Methods, schedule and personnel
  - d. Potential impacts on refuge wildlife and/or habitat
  - e. Provisions to minimize disturbance, injury, or mortality and prevent the introduction of invasive or pest species
  - f. Compliance with established standards for proper animal care and use
  - g. Data standards and data management plan
  - h. Costs to the refuge, if any
  - i. Anticipated end products (i.e. reports, publications, recommendations)
3. Research plans will be reviewed by refuge staff. Evaluation criteria will include, but not be limited to the following:
  - a. Research that has direct relevance to management will have higher priority than other requests
  - b. Research that conflicts with higher priority research, monitoring or management programs may not be granted.
  - c. Research that causes undue disturbance or is intrusive, will likely not be granted

- d. If staffing or logistics make it difficult for refuge staff to monitor researcher activity in a sensitive area, this may be reason to deny the request
  - e. The length of the project will be considered and agreed upon before approval - projects will not be open-ended and at a minimum, will be reviewed annually
4. Researchers must possess all applicable state and federal permits for the capture and possession of protected species, for conducting regulated activities in wetlands, and for other regulated activities. Researchers must demonstrate they have approval from the Animal Care and Use Committee, if such approval is required by their research institution.
  5. Archeological researchers must obtain an Archeological Resource Protection Act permit from the Regional Director prior to obtaining a special use permit from the Project Leader.
  6. Sampling equipment, as well as investigator(s) clothing and vehicles (i.e. ATV and boats) will be thoroughly cleaned (free of dirt and plant material) before being allowed on refuge lands, to prevent the introduction and/or spread of pests and invasive species.
  7. Researchers, scientific collectors and surveyors will submit annual progress reports, a final report, and copies of publications (reprints) resulting from their work to the Project Leader.
  8. Researchers, scientific collectors and surveyors will submit an electronic copy of all raw data collected on refuge lands to the Project Leader with the understanding that the researcher will have the opportunity to produce publications based on the data.
  9. If unacceptable impacts to natural resources or conflicts arise or are documented by the refuge staff, the Project Leader can suspend, modify conditions of, or terminate an on-going project already permitted by SUP on the refuge.

**Justification:** Use of the Clarence Cannon NWR to conduct research, scientific collecting, and surveys will generally provide information that would benefit fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats because they will expand scientific information available for resource management decisions. Scientific findings gained through these projects provide important information regarding life-history needs of species and species groups as well as identify or refine management actions to achieve resource management objectives in refuge management plans (especially Comprehensive Conservation Plans). Reducing uncertainty regarding wildlife and habitat responses to refuge management actions in order to achieve desired outcomes reflected in resource management objectives is essential for adaptive management in accordance with 522 DM 1.

It is anticipated that wildlife species which could be disturbed during the use would find sufficient food resources and resting places so their abundance and use of habitats will not be measurably lessened on the refuge when permitted under the stipulations described above. Additionally, it is anticipated that project oversight, as needed, will prevent unacceptable or

irreversible impacts to fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats. As a result, these projects will not materially interfere with or detract from fulfilling refuge purpose(s); contributing to the Mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System; and maintaining the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of refuge lands.

**Signatures:**

**Refuge Manager:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Jason Wilson, Refuge Manager Date

**Concurrence:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Charles W. Blair, Regional Chief Date

**Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date:** \_\_\_\_\_