

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION **ILLINOIS RIVER NATIONAL WILDLIFE AND FISH REFUGES**

Use: Nut, Berry, and Mushroom Picking

Refuge Name: Illinois River National Fish and Wildlife Refuges (Chautauqua, Emiquon, and Meredosia Refuges)

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Executive Order 7524, dated December 23, 1936 (Chautauqua Refuge), Migratory Bird Conservation Act (Meredosia and Chautauqua Refuges), and the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (Emiquon Refuge).

Refuge Purposes: “...as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife.”
“... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.”
“... the conservation of wetlands of the Nation in order to maintain public benefits they provide and to help fulfill international obligations contained in various migratory bird treaties and conventions ...”

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 Uses: The Service proposes to continue to allow the public use of picking berries, nuts and mushrooms for personal use/consumption. Picking of mushrooms, nuts, and berries for commercial uses will not be authorized. Although few in numbers, there is a dedicated group of people who use the refuge for berry, nut, and mushroom gathering. Mushrooms are gathered in the spring and to a lesser degree in the fall. Berries are picked in summer, usually during July. Nuts are gathered in the fall. All these activities occur in the floodplain forests along the Illinois River. Gatherers walk through the woods searching for nuts, berries, and mushrooms. These public use activities allow the use of a renewable resource. These activities are authorized only on refuge lands which are open for other public use activities. These uses have minimal impact on refuge lands and resources.

Availability of Resources: The Refuge has funding necessary to administer these uses within existing budget and with the present staff. Parking facilities are already in place. Law enforcement is low priority with this user group. Litter is minimal.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Impacts are considered minimal due to the low number of people participating in this recreational opportunity. Berry, nut, and mushroom picking as a use is incidental to the refuge being open to other public use. The berries, nuts, and mushrooms gathered by the public are considered surplus to the needs of wildlife and this human activity should not impact on the available resources for wildlife food.

Public Review and Comment: The refuge will post the draft determination on the web site and announce its availability on its Facebook page. A copy will be available at the refuge headquarters in Havana and at the sub-office at Meredosia NWR for 30 days.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: Picking of berries, nuts, and mushrooms will only be allowed for personal use and only when refuge lands are open for other public uses. Picking of berries, nuts, and mushrooms will not be allowed in areas otherwise closed during refuge closure for the waterfowl migration. Picking of mushrooms, nuts, and berries for commercial uses will not be authorized.

Justification: Berry, nut, and mushroom picking removes only a small percent of the available wildlife food resources while providing an enjoyable public use opportunity. This use should result in a greater appreciation of and support for the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Signature: Refuge Manager:

Signature

Date

Concurrence: Regional Chief:

Signature

Date

Mandatory 10 year Re-evaluation Date: _____