

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

Use: Research and biological monitoring

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: Current Service land ownership is about 13,000 acres and may increase over the next ten years with new acquisitions. The Illinois River Refuges will undertake and/or support research and monitoring, outreach, technical assistance, land acquisition and habitat restoration efforts for conservation of migratory birds, endangered species, migratory fish, and a natural diversity of flora and fauna.

Ecological research and biological monitoring will be conducted on Illinois River Refuges to provide information needed for effective decision making for management and restoration projects. The Illinois Natural History Survey, the Illinois River Biological Station, University of Illinois, refuge staff and volunteers and others will study ecological processes, effects of management actions on vegetation and wildlife communities, and monitor fish, wildlife and plant populations to assist refuge staff in making wise management decisions and to support adaptive management processes.

Much of the land within refuge areas is in wetlands, bottomland forest, prairie and other habitats. The Nature Conservancy owns 7,500 acres within the Emiquon acquisition boundary. Presently this land is centered around the restored Thompson and Flagg Lakes and other wetlands, bottomland forests, and prairie habitat. The Conservancy also purchased 1,100 near the Meredosia Refuge area and have restored wetlands, prairie, and forests. The response of wetland plants and invertebrates has been impressive. Results of research and evaluation conducted by these non-government organizations will help guide restoration and management of other

projects along the river and determine the effectiveness of wetlands in improving water quality in the river.

Availability of Resources: Some research and monitoring is funded by grants, the Corps of Engineers, the Natural History Survey, or done by university students and volunteers. Refuge staff involvement includes reviewing research proposals, monitoring research activities, and reviewing reports.

The Service may purchase some of these restored habitats within the refuge acquisition areas as well as purchasing private lands for habitat protection or restoration. All of these restoration projects need to be monitored, evaluated, and managed in accordance with the best science available.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Information gathered in these research and monitoring efforts will enhance the ability of managers to successfully restore and manage river ecosystems. Fish, wildlife and plants require healthy ecosystems for their continued existence and for use and enjoyment by people. Managers will ensure through review and approval of proposals that research efforts will have minimal adverse impact on refuge resources.

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. This information will be available to the Service to assist in restoration and management of refuge lands and will reduce the need for research on Service lands.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: Research and monitoring projects must be reviewed and approved by the refuge manager. The manager will identify all requirements to ensure the use is in compliance with policy and regulations and has minimal adverse impact on refuge resources.

Justification: Research and monitoring information is critical to making sound biological decisions in the restoration and management of ecosystems for fish and wildlife communities occurring on national wildlife refuges. This is an important use to ensure that we have the best information possible upon which to base management decisions.

Signature: Refuge Manager:

Signature

Date

Concurrence: Regional Chief:

Signature

Date

Mandatory 10 year Re-evaluation Date: _____