

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Furbearer Trapping

Refuge Name: Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Established July 26, 1990 under the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-645) which acknowledged the full range of wetland functions and benefits, and called for “the conservation of the wetlands of the Nation in order to maintain the public benefits they provide and to help fulfill international obligations contained in various migratory bird treaties and conventions.” The Refuge was established as an important component of the New Madrid Wetlands Project initiative which is a part of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP).

Refuge Purposes: The primary purposes for establishing the Refuge are to protect, restore, and manage wetlands and bottomland hardwood forest habitat; protect and enhance waterfowl habitat; provide additional breeding, migration, and wintering areas for waterfowl and other migratory birds; provide habitat for resident wildlife; protect endangered species found in the area; and provide for wildlife dependent recreation.

Refuge System Mission: The mission 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: Allow trapping as part of the Refuge Furbearer Management Plan which permits the trapping of beaver (*Castor canadensis*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), and raccoon (*Procyon lotor*). This will address a management need while providing opportunities for recreational trappers. The opening of trapping seasons, trapping methods, and other regulations on the Refuge would generally follow regulations established for the state. Trap selection is based on best management practices (BMP) that ensure the welfare of trapped animals, avoid unintended captures of other non-target animals, and improve trapper safety. Based on BMPs, the Refuge permits the following traps to be used on selected species:

- 1) Body-gripping Traps: Muskrats and Beavers
- 2) Dog-proof Leg-hold Trap: Raccoons

Further restrictions are included within the special conditions of a *Refuge Special Use Permit for Trapping* (Permit). Special use permits will be issued to all trappers that present an Illinois trapping license. Permits will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis and may be limited based on management need. Trappers must carry the State trapping license and the Special Use Permit while trapping. Refuge management may at any time, before or during the trapping season, halt or limit trapping on the Refuge. Conditions of the Permit may be modified as needed; these changes will be made by an addendum which becomes part of the issued Permit. The Permit includes terms and conditions of trapping activity and requires each permit holder to

keep a trapping log. All trapping activities are planned and operated with the Refuge's primary goals and objectives as the guiding principles.

All vehicles are restricted to existing county roads or designated Refuge access roads. Utility and all-terrain vehicles are not permitted except by individuals with a disability possessing a *Refuge Special Use Permit for All-terrain Vehicle Use*. Access by boat is permitted on waters owned by the Refuge; however the Cache River and associated tributaries are not designated as "navigable public water bodies" -- therefore, trappers are permitted on the river where the Refuge owns one side or both sides of the channel. Otherwise use of the Cache River requires permission from the adjoining landowner. In addition the Refuge requires a 10-horsepower motor restriction for safety reasons due to fluctuating /shallow water levels and the presence of numerous debris dams.

Refuge management reserves the right to change specific regulations in the future to ensure that safety requirements or management goals are met. This may include opening newly acquired lands or periodically closing areas to trapping if there is habitat, wildlife protection, or public safety concerns. Additional details and components are included in the Refuge Furbearer Management Plan.

Availability of Resources: The Refuge has been open to public use since its establishment in 1990 and as a result access trails, parking lots, signage and other facilities were developed for visitor use and access. Parking areas have been designated throughout the Refuge and three boat ramps provide access to the Cache River. Staff to maintain these facilities are provided by the Refuge. Staff assistance to enforce Refuge rules and regulations includes shared law enforcement officers stationed at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Police Officers with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Trapping on the Refuge is conducted for resource management reasons with the targets of beaver, muskrat, and raccoon. It is anticipated that impacts to Refuge habitat or wildlife will be minimal as a result of furbearer trapping. Illinois DNR carefully develops density figures when determining annual harvest needs to keep populations healthy. Harvest data from Illinois Department of Natural Resources indicates furbearers (beavers, muskrats, raccoons and river otters) are stable or increasing.

Relatively high populations of beaver and muskrats tend to complicate water management activities and damage wetlands dikes and levees; raccoons have been documented as an efficient nest predator primarily linked to the cause of reproductive failure in birds (Hoover, 2006). Furbearer trapping on the Refuge focuses on the following:

- A. Reduce numbers of beavers, muskrats, and raccoons to limit damage to Refuge habitat and adjoining private property.
- B. Safeguard Refuge infrastructure (levees, roads, water control structures) critical to managing habitat for fish and wildlife.

- C. Provide a traditional recreational use of Refuge resources while meeting the purposes of the Refuge and mission of the Refuge System.
- D. Provide quality trapping opportunities that minimize conflict with other public use activities.

With restrictions that only allow motorized vehicles at designated parking areas/access points along the perimeter of the Refuge, disturbance is minimized. The Refuge trapping program follows all applicable federal laws, regulations and policies; including Migratory Bird Conservation Act, 50 CFR, National Wildlife Refuge System Manual, National Wildlife Refuge System goals and objectives, and the Refuge Comprehensive Management Plan. This activity is compliant with the purpose of the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System Mission; trapping does not alter the Refuge's ability to meet habitat goals, to provide for safety and it does support several of the primary objectives of the Refuge.

Also by offering this use on the Refuge, individuals have the opportunity to engage in a traditional outdoor activity. Trapping (like hunting) also helps to further visitors' knowledge and appreciation of wildlife which can result in increased public support for natural resource protection within the Refuge. Increased public stewardship will support and complement the Service's actions in achieving the Refuge's purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Public Review and Comment: Public review and written comments were solicited from the public during the development of the final Environmental Assessment and throughout the planning effort to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Refuge, Refuge Hunting Plan and the Refuge Furbearer Management Plan. Trapping was not identified as an issue of concern.

Determination:

Use is not compatible

Use is Compatible with the following stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Follow regulations pertaining to trapping on all National Wildlife Refuges and Refuge special conditions for trapping found in the Furbearer Management Plan for Cypress Creek National Wildlife Refuge.
2. Follow applicable state trapping regulations developed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Justification:

Furbearer trapping has been a traditional use throughout southern Illinois and is an important element of wildlife management programs within the Illinois DNR as well as the National Wildlife Refuge System. Furbearer trapping on the Refuge is considered an important management tool in meeting Refuge goals and objectives. Wetland management, dike/levee maintenance, and migratory bird management are influenced by furbearer management. The trapping program conducted on the Refuge is designed to reduce impacts and damage to Refuge facilities and adjoining private property as well as offer a recreation opportunity.

This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented. This use is being permitted as a management tool to meet Refuge goals and will not diminish the primary purposes of the Refuge as well as conservation of migratory birds and other wildlife. This use meets the mission of the NWRs by providing compatible opportunities for the benefit of the American public while conserving fish, wildlife and plant resources on these lands.

Signature: Refuge Manager: _____
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence: Regional Chief: _____
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 15 year Re-evaluation Date: _____