

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Placement of new, small parking areas on Refuge Units

Refuge Name: Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Establishment Act, HR 1230 (P.L. 107-91), and the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex Expansion and Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act, HR 289 (P.L. 108-23).

Refuge Purpose(s): Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was established, "To protect the remaining high quality fish and wildlife habitats of the Detroit River before they are lost to further development and to restore and enhance degraded wildlife habitats associated with the Detroit River. To assist in international efforts to conserve, enhance, and restore the native aquatic and terrestrial community characteristics of the Detroit River (including associated fish, wildlife, and plant species) both in the United States and Canada. To facilitate partnerships among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian national and provincial authorities, State and local governments, local communities in the United States and Canada, conservation organizations, and other non-Federal entities to promote public awareness of the resources of the Detroit River."

National Wildlife 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 the placement and construction of small parking areas on any Refuge Unit where the Refuge Manager considers necessary to provide safe off-road parking and access to the general public for the following permitted activities: hunting of migratory birds and resident game animals, hiking, wildlife observation, photography, fishing, and/or interpretation, all priority public uses on National Wildlife Refuge System Lands. In addition, these parking areas will be used by Service personnel in conducting management activities or biological surveys and assessments on the Refuge Units.

These parking areas will be less than an acre in size and will be relatively primitive facilities such as grass or gravel surfaced. Barriers to restrict motorized vehicles within the parking areas and to identify the parking area boundary generally will be constructed of wood posts, wire fence or rock barriers, appropriate and available on a site specific basis. In some cases small access trails are present to allow safe access to these units. Most areas will accommodate 5 - 15 vehicles, and thus the human impact from their use is minimal.

Is the use a proposed new use or an existing use?

This is an existing use.

Is the use a priority public use?

Constructing small parking areas is not a priority use of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Where would the use be conducted?

The use would be conducted in non-native forests or grassland or sparse vegetation adjacent to roadways that would allow visitors to safely get off of road surfaces in order to gain access to our lands that are open for public access.

When would the use be conducted?

Parking areas are typically constructed when the ground is not frozen as they are primarily constructed by pounding or digging in posts. This could occur from March to November. Parking areas are usually constructed in one day but occasionally 2 days, so the duration of the disturbance on the sites is very short. The lifespan of a parking area is typically 20+ years, so the need for major disturbance more frequently is unlikely.

How would the use be conducted?

We will use heavy equipment to construct parking areas. The disturbance involved in this development is limited to typically one day to install the area. In most cases the areas are mowed once per year to prevent wildfires from vehicles during major use times, especially hunting seasons. No one is permitted to camp, have camp fires, stay overnight, or use parking areas differently than from the regulations governing the use of the entire Refuge, except that they are allowed to park their vehicle.

Why is this use being proposed?

We establish parking areas to create access point where rules, regulations, guidelines, and information can be provided to those who access our lands. Due to the accessible nature of our land, safety of the public and our staff is a huge concern. By developing parking areas we can ensure people are safely off roads and out of traffic.

Availability of Resources:

What resources are needed to properly and safely administer use?

A minimal amount of supplies, such as wood posts, steel posts, wire and gates are used for the construction of these parking areas. On an annual basis the Refuge only construct a hand full of these areas, so the material cost is low. The labor involved with construction is typically less than one week's time for one staff member annually. Maintenance of the areas typically involves mowing the areas once per year in order to prevent wildfires during high use times of the year. Law enforcement of rules and policies is probably the largest expenditure of time, but in the enforcement of many other rules, policies and boundary compliance, parking area law enforcement does not add significantly to the work load.

Are existing Refuge resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?

Parking areas require a minimal effort of time and resources to construct so that the public and our staff have safe access to Refuge units. Most of the time less than \$2,000 is spent annually on materials and one week of time is required for one staff member to do new installations and maintain existing areas for public safety. The staff time involved with installation, maintenance and compliance is completely acceptable for the safety provided to staff and the public.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does the use affect Refuge purposes, the Refuge System mission, and Refuge goals and/or objectives?

Installation and use of these parking areas and access trails will result in minimal impacts as these parking areas are used infrequently during most of the year by either the general public participating in authorized and permitted activities or by Service personnel. Peak use of these areas will generally occur during fall hunting seasons when no disturbance to nesting or young animals will result. Impacts to habitat will be minimal due to their relatively small size (<1acre) by comparison to the average size of Refuge.

Impacts will be lessened by selection of sites away from any wetland or native prairie. Generally parking areas will be constructed at or near abandoned sites utilizing existing graveled driveways or previously constructed approaches immediately off of public roadways. Parking lots constructed within the interior of a unit will be avoided whenever possible to minimize wildlife disturbance, impacts to unique or critical habitats and conflicts with other authorized public uses.

Public Review and Comment:

Comments can be sent to:
Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge
Attn: Jody DeMeyere
9311 Groh Road
Grosse Ile, MI 48138

E-mail:
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Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

_____ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Potential Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Parking areas must not be constructed in areas where negative wetland impacts will result.
2. Parking areas must not be constructed on native prairie habitat.
3. Camping, overnight use and fires are prohibited.
4. Location of parking areas within the interior of each unit should be avoided whenever possible.
5. An archaeological review of each selected site shall be made through the Regional Historic Preservation Officer prior to construction.