

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

Hunting Chapter of Visitor Service Plan

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Prepared By: _____ Date: _____
Steve Dushane, Assistant Refuge Manager

Reviewed By: _____ Date: _____
John Hartig, Refuge Manager

Concurred By: _____ Date: _____
Matt Sprenger, Refuge Supervisor, Area 1

Approved By: _____ Date: _____
Rick Schultz, Regional Chief, NWR System

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I. INTRODUCTION

The hunting chapter precedes the overall Visitor Services Plan for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR). It provides general guidance for providing Refuge hunting opportunities and contains specific plans for hunting on lands that are federally owned and part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

DRIWR currently owns 2,040 acres divided into 13 separate units in southeast Michigan along the Detroit River and western basin of Lake Erie in Wayne and Monroe counties. An additional 3,720 acres divided into five units are managed under cooperative management agreements between the Refuge and other landowners. The Refuge acquisition boundary stretches along 48 miles of Detroit River and western Lake Erie shoreline from the Rouge River to the Ohio state line that represent the north and south boundaries, respectively (Figure 1). DRIWR is within an hour's drive of nearly seven million people in the Detroit, Michigan; Windsor, Ontario; and Toledo, Ohio metropolitan areas.

The majority of the acquisition boundary is made up of the open water habitats of Lake Erie and the lower Detroit River including several islands (Figure 1). Habitat types within the coastal and inland portions of the acquisition boundary include Great Lakes coastal wetland, shoal, wet meadow, old fields, shrubland, agricultural lands, beach ridge and both hydric and mesic forest. These ecosystems preserve the natural communities of plants, animals and other associated biota in the Detroit River and western Lake Erie basin. They are significant to the migration of a diverse range of species that use the Great Lakes ecosystems and its shorelines as migration corridors and maintain trust species and resources in this urban area.

The catalyst for the protection of the Detroit River and the establishment of the Refuge was a partnership of many non-profit organizations, corporations, universities, governments, and other agencies. In 2005, a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Refuge were developed and approved. The CCP and EA address future management of the Refuge, including protecting potentially 13,300 acres of land for wildlife and providing visitor services. All six priority public uses (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation) identified in the 1997 Refuge Improvement Act could be provided at DRIWR in the future and compatibility determinations have been completed and approved for all of them.

Past hunting opportunities within the proposed Refuge boundary have been managed and regulated by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) (Table 1). Rules and regulations, including limits, are established by the State of Michigan and/or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Figure 1. Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Units

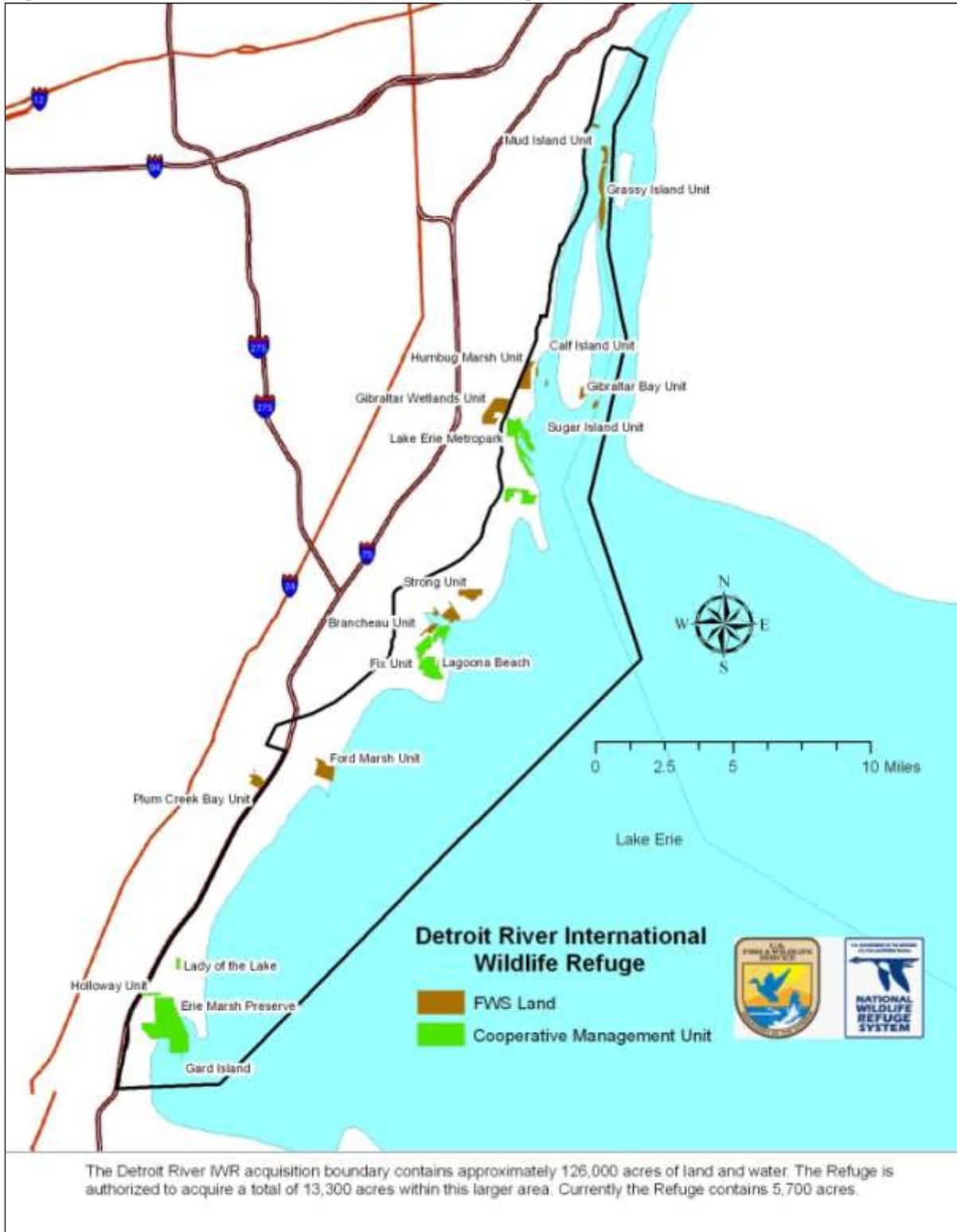


Table 1. Species open to hunting on USFWS owned lands within the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Acquisition Boundary.

Big Game	Small Game
white-tailed deer	cottontail rabbit
turkey	gray fox
	red fox
Migratory Birds	coyote
American Woodcock	ring-necked pheasant
Sora	raccoon
Virginia Rail	gray squirrel
Wilson's Snipe	fox squirrel
Duck species	
Geese species	

There are more than 6,600 acres of State Game/Wildlife Areas and 1,157 acres of State Park within the Refuge acquisition boundary that are operated and managed by the MDNR. All are currently open to hunting with time and area restrictions. The Pointe Mouillee State Game Area is the largest State Game Area within the Refuge acquisition boundary with a total of 4,344 acres. This Game Area includes Celeron (176 acres) and Stoney (128 acres) Islands which are located in the Detroit River. The Erie State Game Area and the Pointe Aux Peaux State Wildlife Area are 2,360 acres and 220 acres, respectively. The Sterling State Park is approximately 1,100 acres and also offers hunting on a limited basis.

All DRIWR inland units can be accessed from Interstate 75 and/or Jefferson Avenue/US Turnpike/Dixie Highway. These roads run from northeast to southwest along the west side of the Refuge’s acquisition boundary. All Refuge units, with the exception of the Plum Creek Bay Unit, are located east of Interstate 75. Although some may remain closed to public use, most DRIWR units are accessible by public road. The Brancheau Unit is accessible only by way of Blanchette Road, which is private. This must be taken in to consideration during development of this Hunt Plan and subsequent Visitor Services Plan chapters. DRIWR units accessible only by boat are Mud Island, Grassy Island, Mama Juda Shoal, Humbug Island, Calf Island, Sugar Island and Gard Island.

This hunting chapter has been prepared with a goal of providing the rationale and framework for the hunting program; providing a quality, wildlife-compatible, hunting experience; and implementing wildlife and hunting programs within an adaptive management context where assessments are performed, priorities are established, and actions taken in an iterative fashion for continuous improvement with input from all stakeholders. As such, this program will be closely monitored by soliciting comments from hunters and tracking resource status. Hunting opportunities will be modified, as needed, to protect wildlife and ensure a quality hunting experience.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service definition of quality as noted in the *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Manual* (605 FW1) as follows:

- A.** Promotes safety of participants, other visitors, and facilities;
- B.** Promotes compliance with applicable laws and regulations and responsible behavior;
- C.** Minimizes or eliminates conflict with fish and wildlife population or habitat goals or objectives in an approved plan;
- D.** Minimizes or eliminates conflicts with other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation;
- E.** Minimizes conflicts with neighboring landowners;
- F.** Promotes accessibility and availability to a broad spectrum of the American people;
- G.** Promotes resource stewardship and conservation;
- H.** Promotes public understanding and increases public appreciation of America's natural resources and our role in managing and conserving these resources;
- I.** Provides reliable/reasonable opportunities to experience wildlife;
- J.** Uses facilities that are accessible to people and blend into the natural setting; and
- K.** Uses visitor satisfaction to help define and evaluate programs.

II. CONFORMANCE WITH STATUTORY AUTHORITIES

Several laws and a recent executive order apply to hunting on national wildlife refuges. They are summarized below.

National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997

Signed by President Clinton on October 9, 1997, this law defines compatible wildlife-dependent recreation as "legitimate and appropriate general public use of the [National Wildlife Refuge] System." It establishes hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation as "priority public uses" where compatible with the mission and purpose of individual national wildlife refuges.

Executive Order 12996 (March 25, 1996)

This Executive Order, entitled "Management and General Public Use of the National Wildlife Refuge System," contains a directive to: "...recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation as priority general public uses of the Refuge System..."

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966

This Act (16 U.S.C. 668 dd-ee; 80 Stat. 927) authorizes the Secretary to "...permit the use of any area within the System for any purpose...compatible with the major purposes for which such areas were established..."

The Refuge Recreation Act of 1962

This Act (16 U.S.C. 460k) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer such areas for public recreation as an appropriate incidental or secondary use only to the extent that it is practicable and not inconsistent with the primary objectives for which the area was established. In addition, the Refuge Recreation Act requires that funds are available for the development, operation, and maintenance of the permitted forms of recreation.

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 50

Section 31.2(e) lists hunting as a method of surplus wildlife population control.

Section 31.15 states that the privilege of hunting may be extended to the general public.

Section 32.1 states that the opening of a wildlife refuge area to hunting will be dependent upon the provisions of law applicable to the area and upon a determination by the Secretary of the Interior that the opening of the area to the hunting of migratory game birds, upland game, or big game will be compatible with the principles of sound wildlife management and will otherwise be in the public interest.

Section 32.2 of Title 50 CFR has provisions applicable to each person engaged in public hunting on a wildlife refuge area.

Section 32.3 of Title 50 CFR explains the procedure for publication of special regulations.

III. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

A. Refuge Purpose

The DRIWR was established by an Act of Congress which became Public law 107-91 on December 21, 2001. Section 4 of the Act states the following purposes for the new DRIWR:

1. 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
2. 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
3. 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 in Canada, conservation organizations, and other non-Federal entities to promote public awareness of the resources of the Detroit River

Upon establishment in 2001, all lands within the former Wyandotte National Wildlife Refuge were incorporated into DRIWR. The Wyandotte National Wildlife Refuge was established by an Act of Congress known as Public Law 87-119, 75 Stat. 243, 87th Congress, H.R. 1182, dated August 3, 1961: ... “to be maintained as a refuge and breeding place for migratory birds and other wildlife...”. Mud Island was added to Wyandotte NWR in January 2001 using the authority to accept donations of real property contained in the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742f). The islands and shoals of the former Wyandotte NWR retain their original legislative purposes, as well as gaining new ones from the 2001 legislation.

B. Goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System

The goals established for the National Wildlife Refuge System as outlined in the *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Manual* (601 FW 1) are delineated below:

- Conserve a diversity of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats, including species that are endangered or threatened with becoming endangered.
- Develop and maintain a network of habitats for migratory birds, anadromous and interjurisdictional fish, and marine mammal populations that is strategically distributed and carefully managed to meet important life history needs of these species across their ranges.

- Conserve those ecosystems, plant communities, wetlands of national or international significance, and landscapes and seascapes that are unique, rare, declining, or underrepresented in existing protection efforts.
- Provide and enhance opportunities to participate in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation).
- Foster understanding and instill appreciation of the diversity and interconnectedness of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats.

C. Goals of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

As outlined in the approved Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment.

- Establish functional partnerships involving communities, industries, governments, citizens, non-profit organizations and others to manage and promote the Refuge consistent with the plan's vision statement and the Act that created the Refuge. Provide an institutional framework to develop effective private or public partnerships for the purpose of sustainability
- The Refuge will facilitate and promote hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, environmental education, and interpretation as wildlife-dependent uses
- Visitors and local citizens demonstrate a strong conservation ethic that supports the Refuge and broad-based environmental awareness
- Future development that occurs within surrounding watersheds that may impact the Refuge is well planned, environmentally sustainable, and reflects known Best Management Practices (e.g., the most efficient and effective techniques, methods, and processes for accomplishing a particular task like land use planning and management)
- People living or working within the Refuge watersheds will understand and appreciate the importance and ecological value of the Detroit River and western Lake Erie, and their contributing watersheds, to fish and wildlife, and to human quality of life
- The hunting and fishing heritage, cultural resources and cultural history of the Refuge are valued and preserved, and connect Refuge staff, visitors, and the community to the area's past
- Fish and wildlife communities are healthy, diverse and self-sustaining

- Reduce levels of toxic substances to a threshold that does not threaten or harm or adversely affect wildlife, fish or human health
- Economic development and redevelopment is environmentally sustainable, well planned, and aesthetically pleasing
- Restore beneficial uses of water resources in the Refuge
- Lands and waters within the Refuge are responsibly managed to resolve potentially conflicting uses

D. Hunting Program Objectives

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policy on hunting as stated in the *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Manual* (605 FW 2) is: “Hunting is an appropriate use of the Refuge System when compatible. It is also considered a priority general public use of the Refuge System and should receive enhanced consideration over non-priority uses. We strongly encourage refuge managers to provide visitors quality hunting opportunities when compatible”. In addition to a compatibility determination, the Refuge Recreation Act requires verification that funds are available for the development, operation and maintenance of the hunting program.

The Service has long recognized that hunting is an integral part of a comprehensive wildlife management program and that significant positive benefits can be attributed to a well-managed hunt. Hunting is also recognized as an acceptable, traditional form of wildlife-oriented recreation that can be, and sometimes is, used as a management tool to effectively manipulate wildlife population levels.

This is especially true in southeast Michigan where those lands have traditionally supported hunting. In situations where hunting opportunities may be modified, the reasons include: wildlife population considerations, habitat maintenance, providing for safety and maintaining a high-quality hunt, and in rare cases, protecting research populations from unwanted impacts.

This hunting plan may be implemented in phases over the next five years based on staff, budget and available resources. It is the goal of DRIWR to implement all aspects of this plan immediately, however final concurrence on logistics for the Brancheau Unit have not been formally finalized at this time. Hunting in the Brancheau unit will be in cooperation with the MDNR. Implementing this plan in phases will allow time to develop necessary infrastructure and allow the refuge to submit future open packages for inclusion in the Code of Federal Regulations without the need for a revised plan or a new environmental assessment.

The DRIWR hunting program objectives are listed below:

- Provide the public with safe and enjoyable hunts that are compatible with the Refuge purpose
- Provide quality hunting opportunities that minimize conflict with other public use activities
- Provide the public with opportunities to hunt wildlife species consistent with the laws and regulations of the State of Michigan, that do not adversely affect local wildlife populations, and are consistent with the 1997 National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act
- Provide hunting opportunities for youth, disabled persons and other underserved populations

Hunting on DRIWR shall be in accordance with State, federal and Refuge regulations. The refuge will institute weapons restrictions, safety zones, and similar special conditions for safety, wildlife management, and other reasons consistent with similar restrictions already in place on State Game Areas included within the Refuge boundary. Portions of the Refuge open for hunting will be designated by signs and/or shown on maps that will be available to the public. Special regulations may need to be implemented to ensure a quality hunt program.

E. Relationship of Hunt Program to Goals and Objectives

A Refuge hunting program would provide the public with high quality wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities. The impacts of a hunting program on the Refuge will be minimized through specific regulations developed with public input as is already the case on state owned managed areas within the Refuge acquisition boundary. Safety issues, game population concerns, non-target species impacts, endangered species impacts, and "quality hunt" parameters have all been addressed in the Hunt Program Environmental Assessment.

F. Plan Development

This Hunt Plan was developed from the scientific and management foundation laid by the U.S.-Canadian Conservation Vision established in 2000, the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Establishment Act of 2001 that called for ensuring that hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation are the priority uses of the Refuge, and the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan of 2005 that calls for allowing hunting and fishing to the maximum extent, except where contaminant exposure, safety, or sensitive species needs prohibit such uses. Hunt Plan development was delayed for several years because of a national law suit over evaluating cumulative impacts of hunting in

National Wildlife Refuges. Numerous opportunities were given to provide input relative to this Hunt Plan. See Table 2 for a brief history of activities relative to Hunt Plan development.

This Hunt Plan was developed in partnership with MDNR and other stakeholder groups. Further, as noted in the Refuge Establishment Act and the Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the Service recognizes that this Hunt Plan cannot be implemented without the help and assistance of MDNR and other partner organizations. The Service pledges to collaborate and cooperate with MDNR and other stakeholder groups to achieve Refuge goals, including implementing this Hunt Plan.

It is explicitly recognized by the Service that management of all State lands within the acquisition boundary of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge remains under the authority and purview of the MDNR. It must be recognized that this Hunt Plan only addresses hunting on federally owned Refuge lands.

Both the Service and MDNR recognize that trapping is a valuable management tool to help achieve land management goals as well as offer recreational opportunities to the public. Trapping is very important for controlling certain mesopredator populations that could negatively impact waterfowl and shorebird recruitment as well as vector disease (e.g. raccoons, skunks). Species such as muskrats, woodchucks and beaver can damage dikes, water control structures and roads that are essential for management. Trapping will not be opened as part of this hunt plan and will be addressed in a separate plan.

Table 2. A brief history of activities related to Hunt Plan development.

Date	Activity Related to Hunt Plan Development
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Vision for the Lower Detroit River Ecosystem established between U.S. and Canadian stakeholders
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Establishment Act signed into law
2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Conservation Plan developed with broad stakeholder input to guide management for a 15-year timeframe
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive Conservation Plan completed and approved by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on April 27, 2005 • MDNR and USFWS joint meeting on refuge (Nov. 23)
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed hunting fact sheet for Refuge • Convened hunting public meeting with Gibraltar Duck Hunters Association and Downriver Chapter of Ducks Unlimited (April 10)
2006-2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of new Refuge Hunt Plans delayed by national law suit
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuge Law Enforcement/Public Use Meeting (Feb. 27) • Convened law enforcement coordination meeting, including MDNR staff

	and conservation officers (May 27)
2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertised and convened Humbug Marsh Public Use Forum (Jan. 16) • Hunting Program outline developed and sent to MDNR (Joe Robison and Tim Payne) for input and concurrence (April 7) • Met with MDNR staff (Joe Robison and Tim Payne) to reach agreement on Hunting Program outline and move forward with development (April 21) • Advertised and convened Public Forum on hunting in the Refuge to present Hunting Program outline to public (April 30)
2009-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunt Plan and Environmental Assessment developed • Submitted to FWS Region 3 and MDNR (Oct. 29)
2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hunt plan and Environmental Assessment available for review and public comment (Feb. 10 – Mar. 12)

IV. ASSESSMENT

Currently, wildlife populations are evaluated by the State of Michigan and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of county, state, national or international wildlife population surveys. Existing surveys conducted by the State of Michigan and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to be used to evaluate hunting opportunities. Some wildlife populations within the DRIWR boundary are expected to change as wildlife habitats are restored. Additional wildlife assessments and monitoring will be performed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MDNR, universities, and others to monitor status, trends, and any possible impacts. Refuge staff will be responsible for evaluating any possible impacts on Refuge lands.

An assessment of Refuge resources can be found in the Hunt Program Environmental Assessment that has been prepared to address the impacts of opening the Refuge to hunting. This document addresses environmental impacts, population status, inter-specific competition, and effects of hunting on non-target species. In summary, the hunt program will not result in unacceptable impacts to the Refuge resources. Those species proposed for hunting will not be adversely affected by the hunt program at a regional level, provided the Refuge-specific regulations listed in this document are followed.

V. DESCRIPTION OF THE HUNTING PROGRAM

A. Guidelines for Hunt Program

The guiding principles of the Refuge System's hunting programs as outlined in the *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Manual* (605 FW 2) are to:

- Manage wildlife populations consistent with Refuge System-specific management plans approved after 1997 and, to the extent practicable, State fish and wildlife conservation plans;
- Promote visitor understanding of and increase visitor appreciation for America's natural resources;
- Provide opportunities for quality recreational and educational experiences consistent with criteria describing quality found in [605 FW 1.6](#);
- Encourage participation in this tradition deeply rooted in America's natural heritage and conservation history; and
- Minimize conflicts with visitors participating in other compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities.

Hunting on Refuge owned lands will begin annually no earlier than August 1 and continue through no later than May 31 of the following calendar year. All Refuge hunting seasons will coincide with State hunting seasons. Hunting times will coincide with State hunting times. No hunters will be allowed to access any portion of the Refuge earlier than 1½ hours prior to the State listed morning shooting time or remain on the Refuge past 1 hour after the State listed evening shooting time.

B. Areas Open to Hunting

The Service is in the process of acquiring more land for DRIWR and as each tract is acquired it will be considered for inclusion in the Refuge hunt program. Certain tracts may be closed to hunting based on safety factors, size of tract, legal restrictions, local ordinance, access, and compatibility with Refuge objectives.

Upon implementation of this plan, the following Refuge Units will be open to big game, small game and/or migratory bird hunting; Humbug Island, Calf Island, Sugar Island, Strong (excluding the Burke tract), Fix and Plum Creek Bay (Figure 2). The Brancheau Unit will be open only to waterfowl hunting and hunting will be in cooperation with the MDNR. See figure A-1, A-2 and A-3 in Appendix A for unit specific hunting maps.

Species to be hunted and specific procedures and regulations will be addressed later in this plan. The Service honors all state and local laws applicable to hunting.

The open water coastal areas such as Humbug Marsh, Mama Juda Shoal, and waters surrounding Mud Island, Grassy Island, Humbug Island, Calf Island, Sugar Island Strong and Brancheau are currently open to waterfowl hunting below the ordinary high watermark in accordance with State laws and Regulations. Hunting from shore or entry onto uplands of Mud Island and Grassy Island or the mainland portion of the Humbug Marsh Unit above the ordinary high watermark, is prohibited. See appendix B for a list of all DRIWR units opened and closed to hunting. Hunting on any of the lands that are cooperatively managed as part of DRIWR will be at the discretion of the property owner/cooperator. The owner/cooperator's policies, rules and regulations in regards to hunting apply (Appendix B). Currently, no cooperatively managed units of the Refuge will be opened as part of this hunting chapter of the Visitor Services Plan nor will this hunting plan affect hunting on State owned/managed lands within the acquisition boundary. Any new lands managed under cooperative management agreements will be evaluated and considered for inclusion in the Refuge hunting program.

C. Species to be Taken

Hunting on DRIWR will be allowed for migratory game birds and resident game species, which are generally sub-divided into migratory birds, big game and small game categories as outlined in Table 1.

- 1. Migratory Game Birds.** The take of migratory game birds according to State regulations will be permitted on the following refuge units; Humbug Island, Calf Island, Sugar Island, Strong, Fix, and the open water portions of the Plum Creek Bay Unit (Appendix A). This includes the take of waterfowl, coot, gallinule, rails, snipe, and woodcock. The take of all other migratory birds will be prohibited. The season and bag limits for these species will coincide with the appropriate state regulations. The use of retrieving and/or pointing dogs for migratory game bird hunting will be permitted; however, the dogs must be under the hunter's control at all times. Approved non-toxic shot is required for any migratory bird hunting on the Refuge.

The diked portions of the Brancheau unit will be a "Waterfowl Only" hunting area opened in conjunction with the general State waterfowl season. Hunting in this portion of the Brancheau unit will not be opened during any early or late waterfowl seasons. Hunting will be allowed under a lottery drawn permit in cooperation with the MDNR and special regulations will apply. Due to safety concerns of residents and to minimize conflicts with those neighboring landowners, waterfowl hunting from designated blinds or zones with a lottery drawn permit will be the only hunting allowed within the diked portions.

Hunting in the undiked, coastal wetland portions of the Brancheau Unit that are open to Swan Creek and Lake Erie is currently opened to waterfowl hunting in accordance with State laws and regulations.

2. **Big Game (White-tailed Deer).** The take of white-tailed deer in accordance with State regulations, State bag limits and seasons will be permitted on the following Refuge units; Humbug Island, Calf Island, Sugar Island, Strong, and Fix (Appendix A). Portable tree stands are the only type permitted on the Refuge. No tree stands may be permanently affixed with nails or screws. No permanent or semi-permanent blinds may be used. Blinds must be portable and removed daily after hunting. Firearm deer hunters are required to wear hunters orange in accordance with State regulations. Wearing hunters orange is required, whether in a portable blind or not.

Also, special hunts such as youth hunts, hunts for disabled persons and other underserved populations may be established within the framework of existing State regulations. The goal would be to optimize hunting opportunities and reduce the deer herd to improve habitat conditions.

3. **Big Game (Turkey).** The take of wild turkey in accordance with State regulations, State bag limits and seasons will be permitted on the following Refuge units; Humbug Island, Calf Island, Sugar Island, Strong, and Fix (Appendix A). Approved non-toxic shot is required for turkey hunting on the Refuge.
4. **Upland/Small Game (Pheasants, Rabbits, and Squirrels).** The take of pheasants, rabbits, and squirrels will be permitted in accordance with State regulations on the following Refuge units; Humbug Island, Calf Island, Sugar Island, Strong, and Fix (Appendix A). The use of pointing and/or retrieving dogs for pheasant hunting will be permitted, as will the use of pursuit dogs for rabbit hunting, but dogs must be under the hunters' control at all times. Fox, gray (including black phase) and red squirrels may all be hunted. Approved non-toxic shot is required for any small game hunting on the Refuge (except single projectile shot for squirrel, fox, raccoon and coyotes).
5. **Upland/Small Game (Furbearers: Foxes, Raccoon and Coyote).** The take of four species of furbearers--red fox, gray fox, raccoon and coyote--will be permitted in accordance with State hunting regulations on the areas listed under section 4 above with the following exception; Night hunting on the Refuge is prohibited. All hunting for these species on Refuge lands will be within the State listed hunting times which are published in the Michigan Hunting and Trapping Digest. Approved non-toxic shot is required for any small game hunting on the Refuge (except single projectile shot for squirrel, fox, raccoon and coyotes). This

hunt plan does not cover trapping of furbearers. No trapping will be allowed through this hunt plan.

- 6. No hunting on the Refuge for the following species.** No species will be hunted on refuge lands if hunting or trapping of that species is prohibited under Michigan State law or by the Michigan Natural Resources Commission. Opossum, porcupine, weasels (including mink), skunk, ground squirrel, woodchuck, muskrat, beaver, American crow, European starlings, house (English) sparrows, northern bobwhite (quail) or feral pigeons may not be taken at any time on the refuge.

D. Justification for Requiring Permits

The Brancheau Unit will be a “Waterfowl Only” hunting area during the general waterfowl season and in accordance with State law. Hunting will be allowed only on selected days and by a lottery drawn permit. Special regulations will apply. (See section VII. C. Refuge Specific Regulations page 20.) All selected hunters for the Brancheau Unit must have in their possession the lottery drawn permit for their specified day, a small game license and both State and federal waterfowl stamps. The permit drawing for Brancheau Unit will be conducted in cooperation with the MDNR.

E. Staffing and Funds

There will be an initial cost for establishing infrastructure that will exceed the anticipated annual costs to implement the hunt plan. The initial expenditures will be for the construction of parking areas, installation of gates, signage, and minor upgrades to a few facilities. Implementation costs for the first year are expected to be in the range of approximately \$50,000.

Construction of three parking areas	\$20,000
New Gates and modification of old ones	\$ 8,000
Initial signage	\$ 2,500
Maps and rules flyer development and printing	\$ 5,000
Staff time and salary for above	<u>\$14,500</u>
TOTAL	\$50,000

During the next few years, the annual cost of this program is expected to be \$15,000-\$20,000. Refuge staff will make changes to the hunt plan and regulations as needed, modify maps and publications as necessary, prepare annual output reports, respond to public inquiries about the hunt program, and conduct hunter-use surveys.

Currently, the Refuge has one, shared, part time, authorized Refuge Law Enforcement Officer and one Zone Refuge Law Enforcement Officer. The Refuge may occasionally request additional Service law enforcement staff to be brought in from other field stations. In addition to

staff expenses, the Refuge will incur costs for signs, vehicle maintenance, road repair and maintenance, parking lot maintenance, map printing, and miscellaneous supplies.

Refuge Staff Time/Salary	\$7,000
Law Enforcement Officer	\$4,250
Law Enforcement Officers Expenses	\$2,000
Maps and rules flyer development and printing	\$2,500
Miscellaneous (signs, vehicle, road work, etc.)	<u>\$2,250</u>
TOTAL	\$18,000

It should also be noted that all law enforcement activities will be coordinated with conservation officers of MDNR to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

(Note: As the staff of the Refuge grows, it will include persons with law enforcement authority, which may reduce the cost to implement the hunt. However, funds will be needed to pay overtime for refuge law enforcement staff and for help from other Refuges and/or full time Service law enforcement agents.)

VI. MEASURES TAKEN TO AVOID CONFLICTS WITH OTHER MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

A. Biological Conflicts

The proposed hunting will cause few biological conflicts with other wildlife species. Some disturbance of other animals is unavoidable when people are on the Refuge and when they are using weapons. However, most of the current and potential Refuge lands were, or are, open for private or public hunting, and may be open to the public for hiking, bird watching and similar activities in the future. Public hunting on Refuge lands will not change the situation very much unless hunting pressure increases markedly. If that happens, the Refuge will take measures, such as having a lottery system or allowing hunting only on certain days of the week, to reduce the number of hunters.

Three federally listed species have been recorded in the Refuge acquisition boundary. The endangered Indiana bat (*Miotis sodalis*), the endangered Northern riffleshell mussel (*Epioblasma torulosa rangiana*) and the threatened eastern prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera leucophaea*) were all historically present within the Refuge boundary. Only the eastern prairie fringed orchid has been documented in recent years. The USFWS has not documented any eastern prairie fringed orchids on any of the management units of DRIWR. It is unlikely that there would be conflicts with Refuge hunting and the orchid. If the orchid is ever documented in areas where there is active hunting, the unit will be re-evaluated to consider any potential disturbance of orchid populations. The major threat to the above species is habitat destruction and modification.

Two candidate species have been documented in the Refuge boundary. Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*) was last recorded on Grosse Ile in 1858 and it is believed to be extirpated from the Refuge boundary. The rayed bean mussel (*Villosa fabalis*), also a candidate species, was last documented in 2003. Shells were found of this species, although no live specimens were collected. It is highly unlikely that hunting at DRIWR would conflict in any way with these two species.

To ensure sound wildlife habitat management, the Refuge will develop and implement a wildlife inventory and monitoring program under the guidance and direction of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Data will be collected to learn more about the population dynamics of Refuge game species and to monitor the effects of hunting, if any, on local populations. Best scientific and statistical methods will be employed, whenever possible, depending upon available staff and funding. Examples of surveys include: waterfowl, singing ground surveys for woodcock, call counts for snipe, secretive marsh bird surveys, turkey brood counts, deer density surveys, and more area specific harvest data for deer, and turkey. Some of this information is necessitated by the existence of the hunt program and may increase the cost of administering the hunts. If hunting is ever determined to conflict with our ecosystem management objectives for the Refuge or become a disturbance issue for threatened and endangered species, the program will be re-evaluated and the program management may change.

B. Public Use Conflicts

Local residents in and around many of the Refuge hunting units are very concerned about safety. The Service is also concerned about safety. All measures possible will be taken to ensure a safe hunting environment as well as ensure the safety of our neighboring residents. Michigan State law requires that no hunting can occur within 450 feet (150 yards) of an occupied building, house or cabin, or other buildings used in a farm operation without written permission of the owner or occupant of the safety zone. This includes firearms, archery and crossbows.

Conflicts with other Refuge users will be minimal during the hunting seasons. Most of DRIWR is closed to other forms of public use at this time. A large portion of the Refuge will remain closed to hunting due to local ordinances, safety and other factors. Once more of the Refuge becomes open to other public uses, those uses will be planned accordingly to minimize conflicts between the hunting public and other user groups. When public use activities have the potential to overlap, trails and public use areas may be temporarily closed. Every effort will be made by Refuge staff to avoid potential conflicts between uses such as hunting and kayaking or research/monitoring, by undertaking strategic event planning and scheduling, time and zone management, and use of other mechanisms.

C. Administrative Conflicts

No administrative conflicts are anticipated.

VII. CONDUCT OF THE HUNT

A. Federal Regulations

Hunting on federally owned Refuge lands may be contingent on specific regulations enacted by the federal agency for Refuges. These are in addition to State regulations and would take precedence where they are more restrictive than the State regulations. Such federal regulations will only apply to properties owned by the federal government. General stipulations for Refuge hunting as contained in the Code of Federal Regulations (50 CFR Part 32) state that hunters must have a valid State license, valid Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (“Duck Stamp”) for waterfowl hunting, comply with all current federal hunting regulations including the migratory bird regulations (50 CFR Part 20), and comply with all State hunting and safety regulations. Additionally, hunters must comply with the terms and conditions established by the Refuge for access to the Refuge itself and for its hunting program. Some of the more pertinent federal regulations for hunting on Refuge lands follow:

- 1) You may possess only approved nontoxic shot while in the field, which we identify in 50 CFR 20.21(j), while on Waterfowl Production Areas, or on certain other areas of the National Wildlife Refuge System as delineated on maps, leaflets and/or signs, available at each Refuge headquarters or posted at each Refuge, or as stated in Refuge-specific regulations. Where we allow deer hunting, you may use slugs containing lead unless prohibited by Refuge-specific regulations and/or State law.
- 2) Each person must comply with the provisions of any Refuge-specific regulations governing hunting on the wildlife refuge area. Regulations, special conditions, and maps of the hunting areas for a particular wildlife Refuge are available at that area's headquarters.
- 3) The use of nails, wire, screws or bolts to attach a stand to a tree, or hunting from a tree into which a metal object has been driven to support a hunter is prohibited on wildlife refuge areas.
- 4) The unauthorized distribution of bait and the hunting over bait is prohibited on wildlife Refuge areas.
- 5) The use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.
- 6) The use of all terrain vehicles (ATVs) or other vehicles on Refuge lands is prohibited.

B. State Regulations

All State regulations will apply to hunting on the Refuge, and all State licenses, tags and stamps will be required.

C. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

In addition to the foregoing State and federal regulations, the Refuge-specific hunting regulations listed below will govern the hunting program at DRIWR and apply only to those lands owned by the federal government. These will be enforced by both Service law enforcement personnel as well as Michigan Conservation Officers.

A. Migratory Game Bird Hunting. We allow hunting of ducks, geese, rails, gallinule, coot, woodcock and snipe on designated areas of the Refuge in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:

1. We prohibit cutting of woody vegetation (see § 27.51 of this chapter) on the Refuge for blinds.
2. All blinds must be portable and you must remove all your blinds, boats, and decoys (see § 27.93 of this chapter) from the Refuge each day.
3. We prohibit the construction or use of permanent blinds, stands, platforms, or scaffolds (see §27.92 of this chapter).
4. You may only possess approved nontoxic shot (see § 32.2(k)) while in the field.
5. Refuge access is limited to 1½ hour prior to the State listed morning shooting time and 1 hour after the State listed evening shooting time.
6. We prohibit the use of paint, flagging, reflectors, tacks, or other human-made materials to mark trails or hunting locations (see §27.93 of this chapter).
7. We allow the use of hunting dogs, provided the dog is under the immediate control of the hunter at all times.
8. You must park all vehicles in designated parking areas.
9. Camping is prohibited.
10. We allow hunting of waterfowl only on Plum Creek Bay Unit of the Refuge in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:
 - i. Conditions A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, and A9 apply

- ii. Access to this unit is by boat only

11. We allow hunting of waterfowl only on the Brancheau Unit of the Refuge in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:

- i. Permits for this unit will be obtained by entering the Michigan Department of Natural Resources daily drawing at the Pointe Mouillee State Game Area.
- ii. All hunters must possess a valid permit for the date they are hunting in the Brancheau Unit.
- iii. Conditions A1, A2, A4, A6, A7, A8 and A9 apply.
- iv. You must remain within 75' (25 yards) of your assigned blind or numbered post. There is an exception for unarmed retrieval of waterfowl.
- v. No boats allowed. All blinds or areas are accessed by walking.
- vi. You may have a maximum of 18 shells per hunter containing approved non-toxic shot.
- vii. No shot size larger than BBB will be permitted.

B. Upland Game Hunting. We allow hunting of pheasants, squirrels, rabbits, foxes, raccoon, and coyote on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations subject to the following condition:

1. Conditions A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8 and A9 apply.
2. You may only possess approved non-toxic shot (see § 32.2(k)) while in the field with the following exception: While hunting fox, coyotes and raccoons in units where it is allowed, the use of single projectile shot such as bullets, slugs or muzzleloader bullets containing lead will be permitted. The use of buckshot will not be permitted for any hunting on the Refuge.

C. Big Game Hunting. We allow hunting of deer and turkey on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:

1. Conditions A1, A2, A3, A5, A6, A8 and A9 apply.

2. We prohibit the distribution of bait or hunting with the aid of bait, salt, minerals or other ingestible attractant (see §32.2(h)).
3. For deer hunting, only single projectile shot may be used. The use of buckshot will not be permitted for any hunting on the Refuge.
4. For turkey hunting, you may only possess approved non-toxic shot (see § 32.2(k)) while in the field.
5. We allow portable tree stands for deer hunting.
6. We allow only one tree stand per hunter per refuge unit.
7. Tree stands do not need to be removed at the end of each day's hunt. However, State rules on tree stands will be strictly enforced.

D. Anticipated Public Reaction

Service staff participated in a variety of public meetings before the Refuge was established. The public voiced support for hunting on the Refuge, since hunting is a traditional and cultural activity in Monroe and Wayne counties. Service staff assured the public that hunting would be considered on the Refuge where and when it was compatible with refuge objectives. Currently, most local residents and business people support hunting on the Refuge, but most of them also have concerns about safety. They are particularly concerned about the discharge of firearms near houses and local roads. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has supported Gibraltar Duck Hunters in their annual youth duck hunt that has included the open waters of several Refuge units. Further, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been a sponsor of the annual Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival since 1995.

Local residents and sporting groups have expressed an interest and willingness to help with the hunt program through the establishment of a Refuge Hunting Working Group. The working group could assist as volunteers with tasks such as updating the Refuge Hunting Regulations/Permit Brochure, blind construction, operating a youth or non-ambulatory hunt, parking area maintenance, and many other tasks. Sportsmen and women in the area are very willing to assist to further hunting for this and future generations.

There may be reaction to the Refuge hunts by anti-hunting groups. Response to any demonstrations or protests will be coordinated through the Midwest Regional Office of the Service, and may require assistance from Refuges who have dealt with these situations in the past. If necessary, State and local law enforcement officials may be asked to assist.

E. Hunter Application and Registration Procedures

All persons hunting on the Refuge will be required to obtain the necessary State licenses, tags and stamps. Migratory game bird hunters will be required to have a Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp ("Duck Stamp"). Lottery drawn permits for the Brancheau Unit waterfowl hunts will be conducted in cooperation with the MDNR or by using FWS form 3-2355 Waterfowl Lottery Application and an application service fee may apply.

F. Description of Hunter Selection Process

Initially, numbers of hunters will be determined by best professional judgment of Refuge staff, with input from MDNR staff. In subsequent years, hunter numbers will be determined based monitoring, assessment, and hunter feedback. Refuge maps and hunting regulations will be available at kiosks on Refuge units, at the Refuge office upon request from the Refuge manager, online, as well as select locations around the area. Hunter numbers may be limited in the future if necessary to promote safety, relieve hunter congestion and public use conflicts, and ensure compatibility with other Refuge objectives. Comments and feedback will be collected by Service Law Enforcement Officers and Refuge staff through field contacts and possible use of FWS form 3-2361 Migratory Bird Hunt Report.

G. Media Selection for Announcing and Publicizing Hunts

The public will be informed of Refuge hunting regulations through news releases, the Refuge website (www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver/index.html), and Refuge hunting maps and regulations leaflets. The address and telephone number of the Refuge will be included in the Michigan Hunting and Trapping Digest, so interested people can contact the Refuge. An annual program update will be filed each year as required, outlining any changes in the current hunt program. Rules and regulations will be published in the *Federal Register* as required.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED ON THE DRAFT HUNT PLAN AND EA

Consistent with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policy, this draft Hunting Chapter and EA were made available for public comment for a 30-day period from February 10, 2011 through March 12, 2011. Copies of the draft Hunting Chapter and EA were made available on-line at the Refuge website:

www.fws.gov/midwest/detroitriver/index.html.

Review copies were also available at:

- The Refuge Office (9311 Groh Road, Grosse Ile, MI 48138; 734.692.7600);
- The Dorsch Library (18 East First Street, Monroe, MI 48161; 734.241.7878);
- The Bacon Memorial Library (45 Vinewood, Wyandotte, MI 48192; 734.246.8357); and

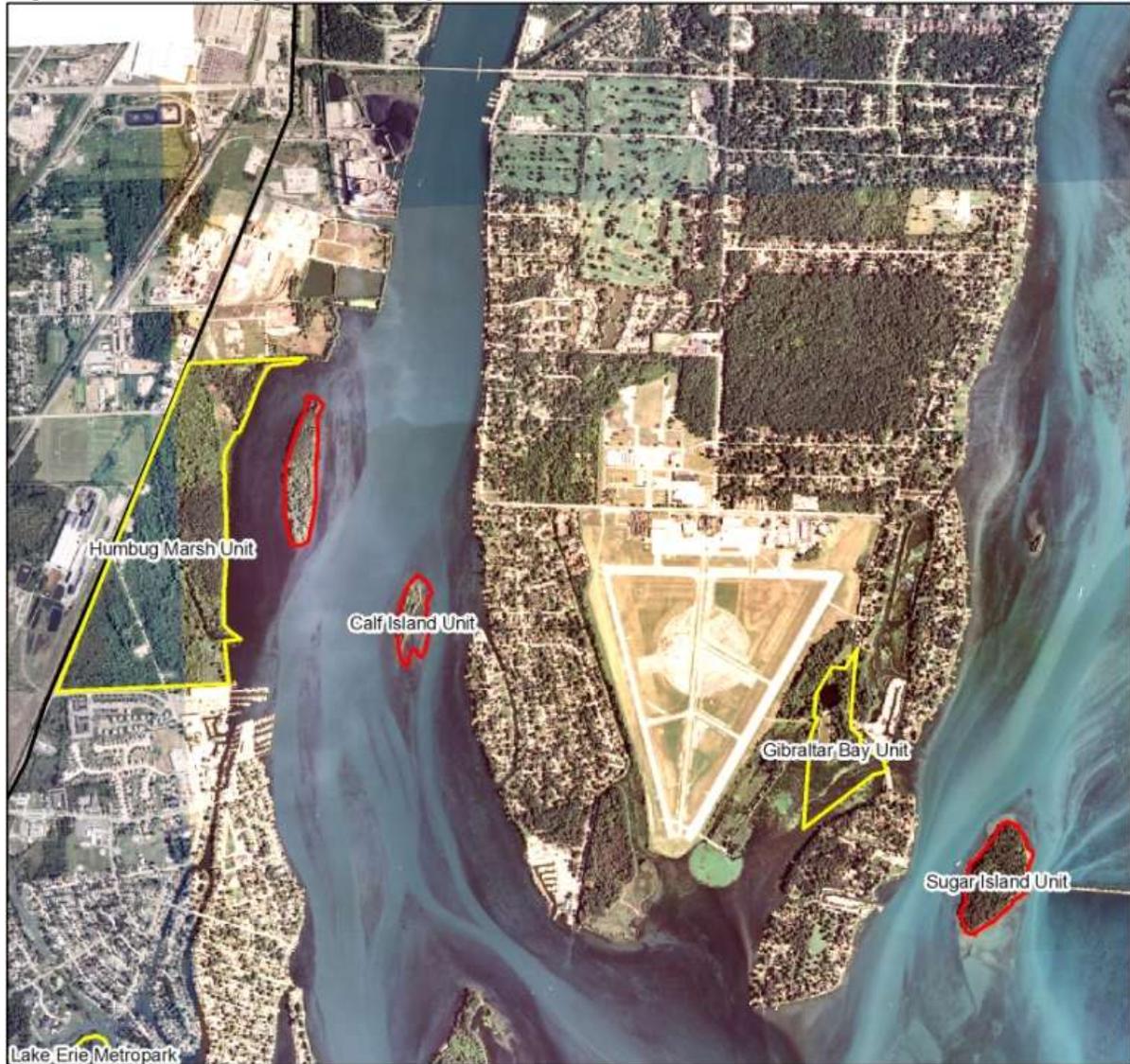
- The Trenton Veterans Memorial Library (2790 Westfield, Trenton, MI 48183; 734.676.9777).

The public was invited to provide written comments to DRIWR by 5 PM on March 12, 2011. In total, 43 written comments were received. All comments were addressed in this revised plan. See Appendix C for a summary of comments received and the DRIWR response.

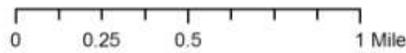
APPENDIX A – REFUGE HUNT UNIT MAPS

The following maps show general boundaries, access points and parking areas for the Refuge units to be opened to hunting through this plan.

Figure A-1. Humbug, Calf and Sugar Island Hunt Units



Hunting Areas



- Big Game, Small Game & Waterfowl
- FWS Land Closed to Hunting*

*Great Lakes and connecting channels' waters are open to hunting in accordance with Michigan State Law.

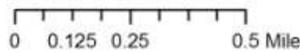


Figure A-2. Strong, Brancheau, and Fix Hunt Units



Hunting Areas

- Big Game, Small Game & Waterfowl
- Special Use Waterfowl Permit Only
- FWS Land Closed to Hunting*
- P Hunter Parking
- Access



*Great Lakes and connecting channels' waters are open to hunting in accordance with Michigan State Law.



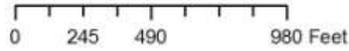
Figure A-3. Plum Creek Bay Hunt Unit



Hunting Areas

-  Waterfowl Only
 -  FWS Land Closed to Hunting*
- No Parking Available

*Great Lakes and connecting channels' waters are open to hunting in accordance with Michigan State Law.



APPENDIX B – LIST OF REFUGE UNITS BOTH OPENED AND CLOSED TO HUNTING WITH GENERAL HABITAT TYPES AND ACCESS POINTS LISTED

Units that will be open to hunting through this plan are shaded in grey.

Hunt Unit	Acres	Description	Hunting Opportunities	Access
Mud Island	21	Island in the Detroit River with forest habitat	Closed to hunting. No hunting or entry on uplands of island above ordinary high water mark (due to close proximity to Dingell Park in Ecorse, MI).	No access
Grassy Island	72	Island in the Detroit River with forest and wetland habitat	Closed to hunting. No hunting or entry on uplands of island above ordinary high water mark (due to historical contamination).	No access
Mama Juda Shoal and waters surrounding Mud and Grassy Islands	233	Submerged bottomlands in the Detroit River owned by Federal Government and managed by FWS as part of DRIWR	Open to waterfowl hunting below ordinary high watermark. All hunting in accordance with State laws and regulations.	Boat Only, No launches on FWS property, closest launch is Wyandotte boat launch
Humbug Marsh	410	See descriptions below		
Humbug Marsh <u>Mainland portion</u> (from water's edge west to Jefferson Avenue)		Forest and wetland habitat	Closed to hunting. No hunting or entry on uplands of mainland above ordinary high water mark (consistent with Gibraltar and Trenton ordinances of no hunting or discharge of a weapon in the city limits).	No Access

Hunt Unit	Acres	Description	Hunting Opportunities	Access
Humbug Marsh <u>Open water portion</u> (from water's edge out into Detroit River)		Open water and coastal wetland habitat	Open to hunting for waterfowl below ordinary high watermark. All hunting in accordance with State laws and regulations.	Boat Only, No access or launches on FWS property, closest launch is Elizabeth Park or Lake Erie Metropark
Humbug Marsh <u>Humbug Island portion</u>		Forest and wetland habitat	Open to hunting for big game, small game and waterfowl. All hunting in accordance with State regulations. Refuge specific regulations may apply.	Boat Only, No access or launches on FWS property, closest launch is Elizabeth Park or Lake Erie Metropark
Calf Island	11	Forest and wetland habitat	Open to hunting for big game, small game and waterfowl. All hunting in accordance with State regulations. Refuge specific regulations may apply.	Boat Only, No access or launches on FWS property, closest launch is Elizabeth Park or Lake Erie Metropark
Sugar Island	29	Island in the Detroit River with forest and wetland habitat	Open to hunting for big game, small game and waterfowl. All hunting in accordance with State regulations. Refuge specific regulations may apply.	Boat Only, No access or launches on FWS property, closest launch is Elizabeth Park or Lake Erie Metropark
Gibraltar Bay	41	Forest, wetland and grassland habitat	Closed to hunting (consistent with Grosse Ile Township ordinance and FAA regulation due to proximity to Grosse Ile Airport)	No Access

Hunt Unit	Acres	Description	Hunting Opportunities	Access
Gibraltar Wetlands	359	Forest and wetland habitat	Closed to hunting (due to City of Gibraltar ordinance and proximity to Gibraltar Carlson High School and Shumate Middle School)	No Access
Lake Erie Metropark Cooperative Management Unit (Owned by Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority)	780	Forest, wetland and grassland habitat	Lake Erie Metropark rules on hunting apply. No areas of this unit will be open to hunting as part of this plan (consistent with Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority rules).	
<u>Strong Northern Portion</u> (from Estral Beach protection dike north to boundary)	168	Wetland, open water and old field habitat	Open to hunting for big game, small game and waterfowl. All hunting in accordance with State regulations. Refuge specific regulations may apply.	Parking area and access off Port Sunlight Road, boat access from Lake Erie
<u>Strong Southern Portion</u> (from Estral Beach protection dike south into Village of Estral Beach)	36	Wetland, open water and farmland habitat	Closed to hunting (due to close proximity to the Village of Estral Beach)	No Access
<u>Brancheau Diked portion</u> (area inside dikes)	70	Managed wetlands	Open only to lottery drawn waterfowl hunting in cooperation with MDNR. All hunting in accordance with State regulations. Refuge specific regulations will apply.	Parking area and access off Brancheau Road

Hunt Unit	Acres	Description	Hunting Opportunities	Access
Brancheau Coastal wetlands <u>portion</u> (area outside dikes and open to Swan Creek and Lake Erie)	82	Coastal wetland habitat	Open to hunting for waterfowl below ordinary high watermark. All hunting in accordance with State laws and regulations.	Boat Only, No access or launches on FWS property, closest launch is MDNR launch at Dixie Hwy and Swan Creek Rd.
Fix	65	Forest, wetland and farmland habitat	Open to hunting for big game, small game and waterfowl. All hunting in accordance with State regulations. Refuge specific regulations may apply.	Parking area and access off Toll Road at the end of Langton Road
Lagoona Beach Cooperative Management Unit (Owned by DTE Energy)	656	Forest, wetland and grassland habitat	DTE Energy/Fermi is closed to unauthorized public access (due to DTE Energy and Nuclear Regulatory Commission rules). DTE Energy/Fermi rules on hunting apply. No areas of this unit will be open to hunting as part of this plan.	No Access
Ford Marsh	243	Wetland, beach ridge and open water habitat	Closed to hunting (due to a use restriction in the donation agreement)	No Access
Plum Creek Bay	126	Forest and wetland habitat	Open to hunting for migratory birds in the open water portions of the unit. All hunting in accordance with State regulations. Refuge specific regulations may apply.	Boat Only, No access or launches on FWS property, closest launch is Bolles Harbor or River Raisin

Hunt Unit	Acres	Description	Hunting Opportunities	Access
Lady of the Lake Cooperative Management Unit (owned by CMS Energy)	49	Wetland and beach ridge habitat	CMS Energy/JR Whiting is closed to unauthorized public access (due to CMS Energy rules). CMS Energy/JR Whiting rules on hunting apply. No areas of this unit will be open to hunting as part of this plan.	No Access
Erie Marsh Cooperative Management Unit (owned by The Nature Conservancy)	2217	Forest, wetland and open water habitat	The Nature Conservancy leases exclusive hunting rights to a private hunting club. No areas of this unit will be open to hunting as part of this plan.	No Access
Gard Island Cooperative Management Unit (owned by The University of Toledo)	19	Forest Habitat	University of Toledo's Gard Island is closed to unauthorized access. The University of Toledo rules state no hunting on any areas of the island.	No Access

APPENDIX C – COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE DRAFT HUNT PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND RESPONSES FROM DRIWR

This draft Hunting Chapter of the Visitor Services Plan (commonly called the Hunt Plan) and accompanying draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) were prepared by DRIWR staff. The DRIWR is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System that includes over 550 Refuges and has grown to over 150 million acres. The National Wildlife Refuge System has over a one hundred year history of conserving fish, wildlife, and plants. In addition to this paramount task of wildlife conservation, the National Wildlife Refuge System also manages for six priority public uses: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, and environmental education.

By law, hunting is defined as a legitimate and appropriate general public use on National Wildlife Refuges. In addition, the DRIWR Establishment Act of 2001 and the Comprehensive

Conservation Plan for DRIWR published in 2005 explicitly state that the top priority in managing the refuge will be protecting wildlife, followed by providing the six priority uses identified above.

The draft Hunting Chapter and EA were made available for public comment from February 10, 2011 through March 12, 2011. In total, 43 written comments were received. A summary of the comments were as follows.

- 79% (34) of the comments were positive (in favor of implementation of the Hunt Plan); and
- 21% (9) of the comments were negative (against implementation of the Hunt Plan).

Of the 34 positive comments received:

- 65% (22) of the respondents supported hunting and provided specific comments on the approach defined in the draft Hunt Plan and EA;
- 35% (12) of the respondents supported hunting, but provided no specific comments on the approach defined in the draft Hunt Plan and EA;
- 35% (12) of the respondents were pleased that the Hunt Plan would increase hunting opportunities in southeast Michigan;
- 12% (4) of the respondents expressed a preference for Option 2 (i.e., Refuge Open With Refuge-Specific Regulations) presented in the draft EA;
- 6% (2) of the respondents expressed a preference for Option 3 (i.e., Refuge Open in Complete Accordance with State Regulations) presented in the draft EA;
- 3% or one respondent expressed a preference for Options 2 and 3 combined (as presented in the draft EA);
- 9% (3) of the respondents were concerned about opportunities for future generations of hunters;
- 9% (3) of the respondents mentioned the important role that hunters play in support of the National Wildlife Refuge System;
- 9% (3) of the respondents questioned why other areas would not be opened (i.e., one for Grassy Island, one for Gibraltar Bay, and one for Plum Creek Bay);
- 3% or one respondent mentioned the need to balance hunting pressure and protection for a sustainable future;
- 3% or one respondent recommended lottery hunts on all areas to be hunted;
- 3% or one respondent recommended no lottery hunts on any areas due to limited staff resources to administer the hunt and increased workload;

- 6% (2) of the respondents supported a managed control deer hunt in the Humbug Marsh and Gibraltar Wetlands Units (not addressed in current plan);
- 3% or one respondent thought safety was adequately addressed; and
- 3% or one respondent felt that the entire refuge should be open for hunting.

The USFWS appreciates the public support for the DRIWR and this Hunt Plan. Specific comments were addressed in the revised Hunt Plan, including clarifying specific concerns.

In addition to the above comments received in support of the draft Hunt Plan, Michigan Department of Natural Resources recommended that Plum Creek Bay Unit be opened for hunting. The revised Hunt Plan now includes Plum Creek Bay open to waterfowl hunting via boat access only. Gibraltar Duck Hunters Association was the only organization to collectively respond in support of the draft Hunt Plan. The Mayor of Gibraltar Michigan, Jim Gorris, commented in support of a managed, control deer hunt on the upland portions of the Humbug Marsh and the Gibraltar Wetlands Units, and offered support and assistance from the City of Gibraltar. This will be undertaken, as necessary, by the USFWS in the future.

As noted above, nine comments were received opposing implementation of the draft Hunt Plan. Of the nine opposition comments received:

- 67% (6) of the respondents opposed hunting in general;
- 33% (3) of the respondents referenced safety concerns;
- 11% or one respondent referenced increased noise; and
- 11% or one respondent did not want hunting near them.

Again, as noted in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, hunting is defined as a legitimate and appropriate general public use on National Wildlife Refuges. Consistent with all hunting programs of the National Wildlife Refuge System, safety is a paramount concern and every effort will be made to ensure hunter safety and the safety of neighboring residents. Noise will be minimized to the maximum extent practicable.

All opposition comments were from individuals. No opposition comments were received from any groups or organizations. Again, hunting is a compatible public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System and Refuge staff is recommending that hunting be opened in the DRIWR following Option 2 (i.e., Refuge Open With Refuge-Specific Regulations) presented in the draft EA. This option would be the most efficient and pragmatic approach. Many minor comments received have been addressed in the revised Hunt Plan and EA. Examples include: clarifying that trapping is typically not for recreation, but rather for use as a management tool; explaining that Grassy Island will be closed to hunting because of contamination resulting from historical use of the island as a disposal area for contaminated sediment; describing that Lagoon Beach and Lady of the Lake are cooperatively managed with industries and are not open to public

access or hunting per company policies and Nuclear Regulatory Commission rules; clarifying that no deer hunting can occur in mainland upland habitats of Humbug Marsh because of city ordinances; etc.

Again, in response to comments received, Plum Creek Bay Unit will be recommended to be opened for waterfowl hunting via boat access only. Refuge staff reiterate that every effort will be made to ensure the sustainability of fish, wildlife, and plant communities, and to offer quality hunting opportunities. In addition, as is standard practice throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System, a very high priority will be placed on hunter safety. It must be recognized that this draft Hunt Plan and EA cannot be implemented without the strong support of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, local city and county governments and law enforcement personnel, conservation clubs, and other organizations. As noted in the DRIWR Establishment Act and Comprehensive Conservation Plan, partnerships will be essential in this urban refuge to reach our common long-term goals for conservation and wildlife-compatible public uses.

Again, the USFWS thanks all the people for taking the time to review and/or comment on the draft Hunt Plan and accompanying EA. This Hunt Plan and EA have been prepared with a goal of: protecting wildlife first as a priority; providing a quality, wildlife-compatible, hunting experience; and implementing wildlife and hunting programs within an adaptive management context where assessments are performed, priorities are established, and actions taken in an iterative fashion for continuous improvement with input from all stakeholders. As such, this program will be closely monitored by soliciting comments from hunters and tracking resource status. Hunting opportunities will be modified, as needed, in the future to protect wildlife and ensure a quality hunting experience.