

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge
Established 1953
***DRAFT* Compatibility Determination (Pre-acquisition)**
The Nature Conservancy (Germania) Tract

Use:

Pre-acquisition Compatibility of Wildlife Dependent Uses (Fishing, Wildlife Observation and Photography, Environmental Education and Interpretation) to Occur On the Nature Conservancy (Germania) Tract.

Refuge Name:

Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

Shiawassee NWR was established as part of a dedicated wildlife area in the flood plain area of central Saginaw County. The area consisted of two units, the Shiawassee NWR administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Shiawassee River State Game Area administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Establishment of the Shiawassee Project was authorized by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission in May of 1953. Federal acquisition authorities used to acquire the federal portion of the dedicated wildlife area were the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. , 714-714r) and the Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. , 460k-460k-4).

Refuge Purpose(s):

Shiawassee NWR was established under the dual authorities listed above with the following purposes:

... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or any other management purpose, for migratory birds.”

... suitable for (1) incidental fish and wildlife oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered or threatened species....”

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 Use:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposes to acquire approximately 135 acres of land from the Nature Conservancy located in Saginaw County, City of Saginaw, MI. Once acquired, this tract will become part of the Shiawassee NWR. This tract is contiguous with existing land managed as the Shiawassee NWR that is owned in fee title or leased from the City of Saginaw.

The uses being reviewed are wildlife-dependent recreational uses, including fishing, wildlife observation, photography, interpretation, and environmental education. These uses are not currently occurring on the Germania Tract, but they are occurring on the rest of refuge lands. Approximately 4.2 miles of paved cart paths traverse the property which would be preserved and maintained. These paths would greatly facilitate use by the general public, in particular for residents of directly adjacent urban areas and visitors to the refuge's Green Point Environmental Learning Center (GPELC) which is directly across the road. Two ponds are located on the property which would be used for shoreline catch and release fishing. Access to the tract is provided by Maple Street and Gabriel Road. Parking is available at the GPELC parking lot. Overall use of the tract should not increase because the site was previously managed as a golf course.

The buildings that were part of the golf course are not included in the acquisition of this tract. After the tract becomes part of the refuge, golf amenities such as ball washing stations will be removed. A chain link fence surrounds most of the tract. This fence would be removed from most locations. Interpretive kiosks and benches would be placed along the cart paths. The open nature of the site will be maintained by replacing the introduced, invasive plants of the fairways and greens with a diversity of native prairie and meadow grasses and flowers. The tract would be open during daylight hours only. The Service would be responsible for maintaining the paths and conducting law enforcement patrols.

Hunting would not be permitted on the Germania Tract. The discharge of firearms is prohibited within the City of Saginaw as outlined in Saginaw Ordinances, title IX, § 130.03(D).

Refuge goals and objectives were most recently updated in September 2001 with completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Shiawassee NWR. This plan will guide management and administration of the 9,620-acre refuge until 2016.

All activities would follow applicable local, state, and federal laws, except where the refuge designates additional restrictions to ensure compatibility with refuge purposes.

Availability of Resources:

Existing facilities on the Germania Tract include about 4.2 miles of paved cart paths. These paths will be maintained by the refuge. The introduced, invasive plants of the runways and greens will be restored to wildlife habitat with a diversity of native prairie and meadow grasses

and flowers. Resources are available to complete these tasks and manage this tract. A boundary survey will be needed.

Anticipated Impacts of Use:

Accommodating wildlife-dependent uses is expected to result in minimal impacts. Hunting would not be permitted on the tract. Shoreline fishing would be available on existing ponds. Most of the tract will be restored to a diversity of native vegetation. The cart paths would be used by individuals or small groups engaged in wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation. Minimal disturbance should result from these activities. Organized public use activities would occur periodically through the year.

Public Review and Comment:

A public review and comment period will be provided for 30 days from January 24 through February 22, 2013. Solicitations for comment will be distributed via a news release to print, television, and radio media. Comments will be requested on the refuge's Facebook page. Paper copies of the document will be available at GPELC (Gabriel Road, Saginaw, MI) and refuge headquarters (6975 Mower Road, Saginaw, MI).

Comments included:

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

 X Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations:

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

To ensure compatibility with refuge purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, five of the priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses can occur on the Germania Tract with the following stipulations:

1. Authorized wildlife-dependent recreational uses must be conducted in accordance with local, state and federal regulations unless the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service places additional restrictions on the activities to ensure compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and policies.
2. Motorized vehicular travel, including motorcycles, automobile, snowmobiles and all-terrain equipment, will not be permitted.
3. Authorized wildlife-dependent uses will be subject to modification if on-site monitoring by refuge personnel uncovers unanticipated negative impacts to natural communities, wildlife

species, their habitats, or neighboring property.

4. The tract would be limited to daylight use only.

Justification:

The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 specifies that there are six priority uses of the National Wildlife Refuge System. As noted in the description of use and anticipated impact sections in this document, no hunting would be permitted. Therefore, five of the six priority uses will be permitted. These five priority uses are anticipated to have minimal impact to wildlife populations and associated habitat. Stipulations above will ensure proper control of the means of use and provide management flexibility should detrimental impacts develop. Allowing these uses also furthers the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System by providing renewable resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving wildlife and plant resources on this tract.

Signature: Refuge Manager: _____
Signature and Date

Concurrence: Regional Chief: _____
Signature and Date