

**Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge
Big Game (Elk, Deer, Turkey) and Waterfowl Hunt Plan**

February 2019

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge
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WICHITA MOUNTAINS WILDLIFE REFUGE BIG GAME AND WATERFOWL HUNT PLAN

I. Introduction

National wildlife refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), the purposes of an individual refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy, and laws and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge (WR or refuge) was originally established by Presidential Proclamation 459 on July 4, 1901, as the Wichita Forest Reserve and later redesignated by Presidential Proclamation 563 as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve on June 2, 1905. The preserve was administered by the U.S. Forest Service until June 1936, when it was transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (formerly Bureau of Biological Survey) as a provision of the Agriculture Appropriations bill (40 Stat. 1446). Shortly thereafter, the area was renamed the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge for administration under the NWRS. The NWRS was established by the Federal Property and Administrative Service Act of 1949 (40 U.S.C. 471-535), as amended; Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1934 (16 U.S.C. 661-666c) as amended; Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j Stat. 1119) as amended; the Act of May 19, 1948, Public Law 80-537 (16 U.S.C. 667b-667d; 62 Stat. 240) as amended; and the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), as amended. In addition, two units of Wichita Mountains Wilderness were established by Public Law 91-504 on October 23, 1970.

In order to meet specific refuge and other broader Service directives, the following purposes and management directives were established for Wichita Mountains WR:

The primary purpose of the refuge is “...*for the protection of game animals and birds and shall be recognized as a breeding place thereof.*”

The Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge is a tract of 59,020 acres embracing a major portion of the ancient Wichita Mountains in southwestern Oklahoma. Protection of this area dates back to 1901 when it was established as a Forest Reserve by President McKinley, and 1905 when President Roosevelt redesignated the area as the Wichita Forest and Game Preserve. The long history of preservation of the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has protected this unique vast land as a reminder of southwestern Oklahoma’s natural conditions prior to European settlement.

On October 23, 1970, the Wichita Mountains Wilderness Area was established by Public Law 91-504. It consists of two units totaling 8,570 acres. The popular Charons Garden Unit (5,723

acres) is located in the southwestern portion of the refuge, within the Public Use Area; the North Mountain Unit (2,847 acres) is located in the north-central part of the refuge within the refuge's Special Use Area. The Special Use Area of the refuge was an administrative designation for an area with restricted public access intended to benefit natural conditions and allow for natural processes. The Special Use Area covers 34,932 acres of the northwest part of the refuge. The Public Use Area of the refuge was an administrative designation as an area for public access, intended to benefit public use opportunities, including hunting and fishing, and promote awareness of the refuge's wildlife and habitats. The Public Use Area covers 24,088 acres of the south and southeastern portions of the refuge.

The refuge owes its character to the range of mountains from whence it gets its name. These topographic features and the climate of the region have created habitats of mixed-grass prairies, Cross Timbers, and rocklands that define the refuge and the biota that live there. The habitats of the Wichita Mountains are so unusual and distinct that it was once designated as its own biotic district (Blair and Hubbell 1938). The refuge lies at a vegetational crossroads or transition along the eastern edge of the southern Great Plains region. The mixed-grass prairies are dominated by little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*), sideoats grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*), hairy grama (*Bouteloua hirsute*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), silver bluestem (*Bothriochloa laguroides*), buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*), and Canada wildrye (*Elymus canadensis*). The Cross Timber forests are dominated by post oak (*Quercus stellata*), blackjack oak (*Quercus marilandica*), and eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*).

While the mixed-grass prairie areas in the refuge are primarily herbaceous, oaks and other trees occur in some areas protected from fire due to topographic position. Additionally, the mixed-grass prairie is dotted by thickets of plum and sumac. Riparian areas in the central mixed-grass prairie contain species such as cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), ash (*Fraxinus* spp.), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), and buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*). The Cross Timbers are one of the largest ecosystem types in the State of Oklahoma, with the majority of this ecotype located in the central and eastern parts of the state. The Cross Timbers habitat is defined by a varying mixture and densities of oaks and red cedar. On the refuge, post oak is the most common species, followed by blackjack oak and red cedar (Buck 1964). The central mixed-grass prairie habitat encompasses 30,941 acres of refuge lands and Cross Timbers habitat encompasses 24,702 acres.

The mission of the NWRS, as outlined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSA), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), 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."

The NWRSAA mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the System to (16 U.S.C. 668dd (a)(4):

- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the NWRS;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the NWRS are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the NWRS described at 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;
- Ensure effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the states in which the units of the NWRS are located;
- Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of each refuge;
- Recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the NWRS through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- Ensure that opportunities are provided within the NWRS for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and
- Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

Therefore, it is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established and the mission of the NWRS.

Public hunts have been offered on the refuge since 1969 with the introduction of rifle hunting for Rocky Mountain Elk and the expansion to rifle hunting for white-tailed deer in 1984. Elk and deer hunting occurs throughout the refuge (10 hunt units; Figure 1) with the exception of areas outside the boundary fence, and areas with high public use, primarily around buildings, roads, and public use facilities, and administrative facilities. These public hunts have provided visitors with additional recreation opportunities on the refuge. All hunts have been administered in cooperation with Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC).

This hunt plan, which replaces the 1984 Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge Hunt Plan, proposes maintaining the big game (i.e., elk and deer) hunting programs, and also proposes additional hunting opportunities that include opening waterfowl hunting within the Public Use Area, except Quanah Parker Lake; opening youth turkey and spring turkey hunting within the Public Use Area and hunt units C, D, E, and G; and allowing the take of feral hogs and coyotes during any refuge controlled hunt.

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

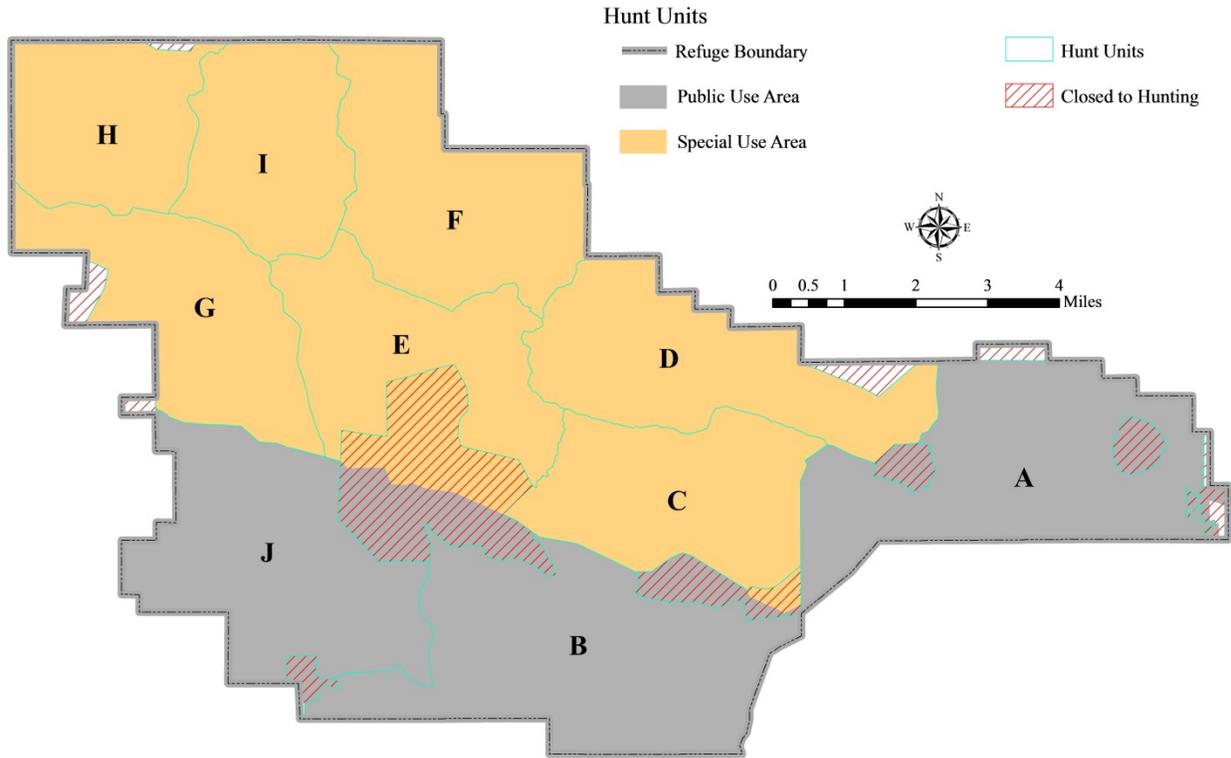


Figure 1. Map of Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, associated administrative use areas, and hunt units.

II. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of a big game (elk, deer, and turkey), coyote, feral hog, and waterfowl (ducks, geese, mergansers, and coots) hunting program on Wichita Mountains WR are to provide:

1. Habitat protection and population management of big game species (elk and deer) within the refuge.
2. Biological diversity by preserving the naturally diverse biotic communities that occur on refuge lands and aid in the reduction of invasive feral hogs.
3. Increased opportunities for wildlife-dependent public recreation as mandated by Service policy and Secretarial Order 3356.
4. High-quality hunting experiences on the refuge, especially for youth, while providing for the safe enjoyment by non-hunting visitors.
5. Public understanding and appreciation of hunting opportunities and clear regulations

through high-quality maps, signs, brochures, and electronic media.

III. Description of Hunting Program

A. Areas to be Opened to Hunting

Areas historically open to controlled elk and deer hunting will continue to be hunted for those species. Refuge lands outside the refuge boundary fence, office areas, and areas with high public use, primarily around buildings, roads, and public use facilities, will continue to be closed to hunting. See Figure 2 for areas opened and closed to hunting.

Areas open to the following new hunting opportunities available on the refuge include:

- Waterfowl hunting is open on all refuge waters (e.g., lakes, pond, creeks), except Quanah Parker Lake, in hunt units A, B, and J
- Youth turkey and spring turkey hunts are open in hunt units A, B, C, D, E, G, and J
- The incidental take of feral hogs and coyotes is allowed for hunters permitted to hunt the controlled elk, deer, and turkey hunts in their designated hunt unit

B. Species to be Taken, Hunting Periods, Hunting Access

Table 1. Wildlife species open to hunting on Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, including hunt types.

Species	General Dates of Hunt
Elk, white-tailed deer, coyote and feral hogs: Controlled hunts; only centerfire rifle	One 2 ½ day hunt for deer in November. One to four 2 ½ day hunts from November (after the deer hunt) to February for elk. Hunters are assigned to hunt units.
Turkey: Controlled hunts; Only shotgun, muzzleloader (federally approved lead-free non-toxic shot only), bow (no crossbow)	One 3-day youth hunt and one 3-day Spring Turkey season (April/May). Hunters are assigned to hunt units.
Waterfowl: Shotgun (federally approved lead-free non-toxic shot only)	<i>Ducks, Geese, Merganser, Coots</i> – Same as statewide season, except closed during elk/deer controlled hunts. Open on all refuge waters (e.g., lakes, pond, creeks), except Quanah Parker Lake, in hunt units A, B, and J. Closed after 1:00 pm daily.

Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge

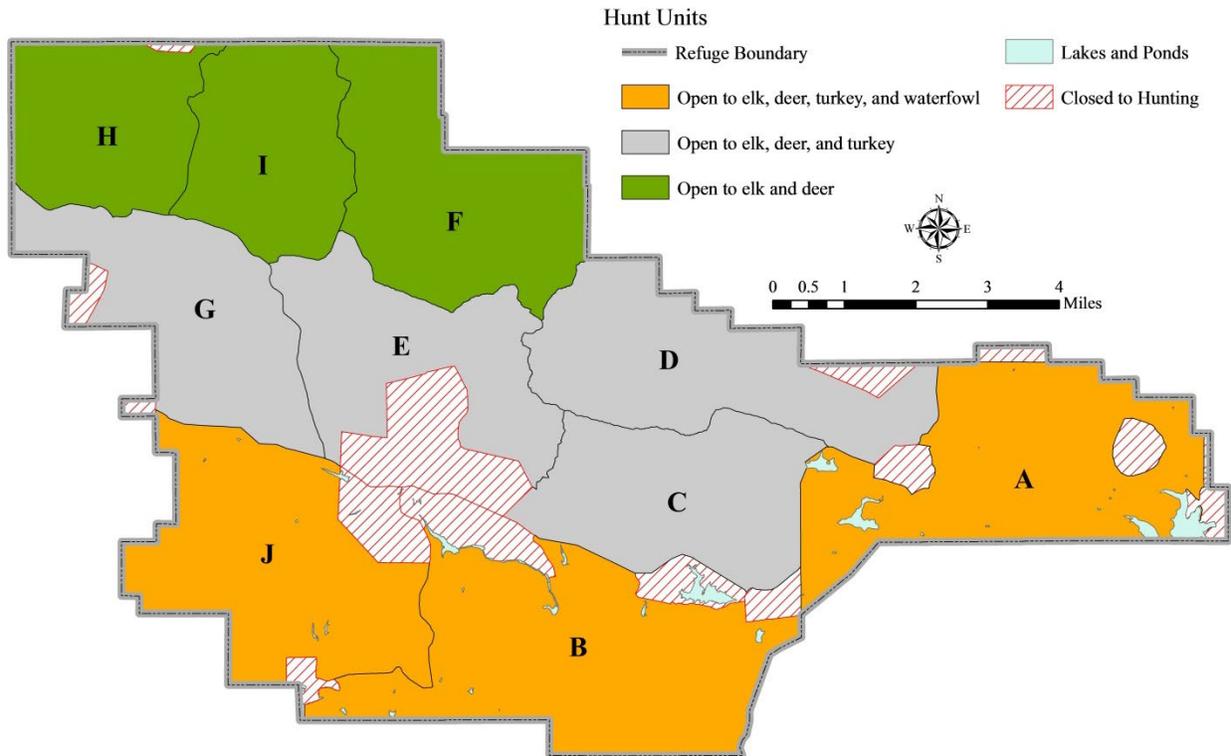


Figure 2. Hunt units within Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge open to hunting as described in this plan and with necessary permits.

Controlled Elk Hunts – Centerfire rifle only

Elk hunting is open in units A through J. Refuge elk hunts run for two and a half days. On the first two days, the hunts take place from sunrise to sunset and on day three from sunrise to 12:00 pm. Refuge staff determines harvest recommendations (90–270 elk) based upon annual surveys and habitat conditions. The state issues hunt permits to successful applicants following random public drawings for the hunts. ODWC sends permits and letters to successful hunter applicants, identifying dates of hunt and refuge rules and regulations. One week prior to each hunt, hunters are randomly assigned to hunt units by refuge staff. Hunters may hunt only within their designated unit. Hunters are transported to and from hunt units via refuge or ODWC operated vehicles due to poor road conditions, no designated parking areas, and concerns about the spread of noxious/invasive weeds. Each hunt is limited to no more than 100 permitted hunters. The refuge may have one to four elk hunts each year depending upon results from annual surveys. Season dates for controlled elk hunts are typically held between December and January, but may be held as early as November (after the deer hunt) and as late as February, depending upon the number of hunts that year. Hunters must be at least 18 years old by the date of each hunt to qualify. Centerfire rifles are the only approved method of take. All harvested elk must be

checked through the refuge check station and a metal transportation tag must be attached to remove a carcass from the refuge. The use of hunt companions, flagging, and safety equipment is recommended.

Elk hunts have historically been highly controlled (supported), whereby refuge and ODWC group leaders transport hunters to and from designated hunt units. A mandatory hunter safety and orientation meeting had also been held at the refuge visitor center the day prior to each hunt. Group leaders will continue to transport and orient hunters to their area and provide a safety orientation for approximately the next five years. To reduce administrative costs and to simplify the process for hunters, we will work with ODWC to study and implement other hunt access options, including walk-in hunting and limited use of personal vehicles off paved roads. Personal vehicles leaving paved roads must be washed and inspected prior to use on the refuge to reduce the spread of invasive species and noxious weeds prior to leaving paved roads at refuge headquarters. In lieu of a mandatory hunter safety and orientation meeting, the refuge will communicate the same information in advance via printed or electronic media, including the use of Avenza PDF maps or similar applications on smart devices. If electronic or printed communications are not adequate to meet hunter's inquiries, a mandatory hunter safety and orientation meeting will be held at the refuge visitor center the day prior to each hunt.

Controlled Deer Hunts – Centerfire Rifle only

Deer hunting is open in units A through J. A controlled deer hunt is conducted in November each year to coincide with the breeding season. Refuge deer hunts run for two and a half days. The first two days the hunt will take place from sunrise to sunset, and on day three from sunrise to 12:00 pm. Refuge staff determines harvest recommendations (25–100 deer) based upon habitat conditions and annual surveys conducted by refuge staff. ODWC issues hunt permits to successful applicants following random public drawings and send the permits and letters to successful hunter applicants, which describe hunt dates and refuge rules and regulations. One week prior to each hunt, hunters are randomly assigned to hunt units by refuge staff. Hunters are transported to and from hunt units via refuge or ODWC operated vehicles due to poor road conditions, no designated parking areas, and concerns with the spread of noxious/invasive weeds. Hunters must be at least 16 years old by the date of each hunt to qualify. Centerfire rifles are the only approved method of take. All harvested deer must be checked through the refuge check station and a metal transportation tag will be attached to legalize carcass removal from the refuge.

Deer hunts have historically been highly controlled (supported), whereby refuge and ODWC group leaders transport hunters to and from designated hunt units. A mandatory hunter safety and orientation meeting had also been held at the refuge visitor center the day prior to each hunt. Group leaders will continue to transport and orient hunters to their area and provide a safety orientation for approximately the next five years. To reduce administrative costs and to simplify the process for hunters, we will work with ODWC to study and implement other hunt access options, including walk-in hunting and limited use of personal vehicles off paved roads. Personal vehicles leaving paved roads must be washed and inspected prior to use on the refuge to

reduce the spread of invasive species and noxious weeds. Refuge staff will inspect personal vehicles before they leave paved roads at refuge headquarters. In lieu of a mandatory hunter safety and orientation meeting, the refuge will communicate the same information in advance via printed or electronic media, including the use of Avenza PDF maps or similar applications on smart devices. If electronic or printed communications are not adequate to meet hunter's inquiries, a mandatory hunter safety and orientation will be held at the refuge visitor center the day prior to each hunt.

Controlled Youth and Spring Turkey Hunts

New youth and spring turkey hunts are open in hunt units A, B, C, D, E, G, and J. Not all turkey hunt units would be used concurrently. Access to hunt units will be by walk-in only from established parking areas. Turkey hunts will be a cooperative effort between the refuge and ODWC. Hunts will be conducted through the ODWC Controlled Hunts Program. Refuge staff select hunt units to be hunted, and allows up to 12 permits based upon annual surveys and habitat conditions. ODWC administers the lottery drawing and issues state permits to successful applicants. The refuge will communicate safety and orientation information to hunters in advance via printed or electronic media, including the use of Avenza PDF maps or similar applications on smart devices. Both controlled turkey hunts are three (3) days in length. Turkey hunting will be managed in accordance with state law except the only approved methods of take are shotgun, muzzleloader, and bow, only lead free non-toxic shot may be used and crossbows are not allowed.

Youth hunters must be 15 years old or younger on the first day of the hunt and must have completed a state sponsored hunter education certification. All youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult who is a non-hunting partner. Non-hunting partners do not need a hunting license. Season dates for youth turkey will be in early-April. Spring turkey hunters must be at least 16 years old by the date of each hunt to qualify. Season dates for spring turkey will be mid-April to early-May.

Waterfowl

New waterfowl hunting opportunities are open on all refuge waters (e.g., lakes, pond, creeks), except Quanah Parker Lake, in hunt units A, B, and J. Waterfowl hunters can access refuge waters from any designated parking areas. Approximately 540 acres are open to waterfowl hunting for geese, ducks, mergansers, and coots, which can accommodate approximately 300 hunters per day, but we anticipate no more than 30 per day. Season dates and general hunting regulations follow those established by ODWC for Duck Zone 2 and statewide goose seasons, except closed during elk/deer controlled hunts for approximately 90 use days a year. Hunting hours are from morning legal shooting hours until 1:00 pm. Waterfowl hunters may hunt on a first come first served basis from the bank or by boat; jump shooting is not allowed. Waterfowl hunters must keep a signed refuge hunt tearsheet on their person in addition to all other state and federal requirements.

Feral Hogs and Coyotes

Harvest of feral hogs and coyotes will be allowed during any refuge controlled hunt. No limit on feral hogs or coyotes. Hunters must use the weapons allowed for the controlled hunt to harvest feral hogs or coyotes.

C. Hunter Permit Requirements (if applicable)

An ODWC issued Controlled Hunt Permit will be required for all refuge elk, deer, youth turkey, and spring turkey hunts. ODWC sends permit and letter to successful hunter applicants identifying dates of hunt and refuge rules and regulations. All permits contain appropriate rules and regulations pertaining to refuge use. Names and phone numbers for each hunter are known, thus they can be notified of unit closures due to weather, fire, or other natural events that could close the unit or refuge to hunting. No refuge permit is required for waterfowl hunting. A signed copy of the general refuge regulation brochure or hunt brochure (tearsheet) shall be kept in the physical possession of waterfowl hunters while in the field. See Hunter Permit Application and/or Registration Procedures below.

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

Refuge elk and deer controlled hunts have been conducted in partnership and coordination with ODWC since 1969. This coordination was accomplished through meetings as well as the refuge soliciting ODWC comments on written hunting plans. Today, the refuge continues to coordinate with ODWC to determine the numbers of permits for each hunt, hunt dates, and other necessary information sharing. Refuge staff will continue to coordinate with ODWC on all controlled hunts at the refuge. The refuge and ODWC work together to ensure safe and enjoyable recreational hunting opportunities.

E. Law Enforcement

The enforcement of refuge and state hunting regulations, trespass, and other public use violations normally associated with management of a national wildlife refuge is the responsibility of commissioned federal wildlife officers. Federal wildlife officers cooperate with, and are assisted by, state and county police officers as well as state game wardens. Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge has proprietary jurisdiction; state and county law enforcement agencies have jurisdiction on refuge lands. Medicine Park and Cache are neighboring cities that have the authority and jurisdiction via a Memorandum of Understanding to enforce refuge regulations. Refuge staff regularly meets with various federal, state, county, and local law enforcement agencies to share information, assist with investigating unlawful activities and coordinate patrols. The additional hunts are not expected to exceed current law enforcement capacity.

Refuge visitor services staff manage the refuge's outreach program and routinely interact with and assists both non-hunting and hunting refuge users during hunting seasons.

F. Funding and Staffing Requirements

Annual hunt administration costs for the refuge, including salary, equipment, law enforcement, brochures, collection of hunt data, and analysis of biological information, etc., totals approximately \$35,000. Refuge base funding is used to conduct hunts. It is anticipated that future funding would be sufficient to continue the hunting program.

IV. Conduct of the Hunting Program

A. Hunter Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures (if applicable)

Applicants must provide all required information as specified by the ODWC through the ODWC's Controlled Hunts Program. This applies for controlled (elk, deer, turkey) hunts only. Controlled hunts are a cooperative effort between the refuge and ODWC. ODWC administers the lottery drawing and issues permits to successful applicants. ODWC tracks preference points for hunters and currently there is no cap (elk hunts only) on the number of preference points a hunter can have. Refuge staff recommends a 10 preference point cap. All applications, required information, fees, and correspondence is coordinated by the ODWC. There are no application or registration processes for waterfowl hunting which is free and operates on a first-come first-served basis.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

Listed below are proposed refuge-specific regulations that pertain to Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, as of the date of this plan.

(i) Wichita Mountains National Wildlife Refuge.

(1) *Migratory Game Bird Hunting.*

We allow hunting of duck, goose, merganser, and coot on designated portions of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) Hunters must possess a current signed refuge hunting tearsheet while hunting on the refuge.

(ii) We prohibit waterfowl hunting during the refuge controlled elk and deer hunts.

(iii) We allow waterfowl hunting from one half hour before legal sunrise until 1:00 pm.

- (iv) Hunters may park only in designated refuge parking areas.
 - (v) Waterfowl hunting is only allowed on refuge waters (lakes, pond, creeks).
 - (vi) We allow the use of hunting dogs only for waterfowl hunting, provided the dogs are under the immediate control of the hunter at all times.
 - (vii) You may only build blinds constructed of natural vegetation materials from the refuge.
 - (viii) Hunters must remove decoys and blinds at the end of each day's hunt.
 - (ix) We prohibit jump shooting.
 - (x) No hunting is allowed within 400 feet of any paved road, parking area, or building/dwelling.
 - (xi) Shooting from or across any designated trail, road or parking area is prohibited.
 - (xii) The use of motorized decoys is prohibited in portions of the refuge designated as Wilderness Area.
 - (xiii) We prohibit the use of game carts or other mechanical transportation devices on portions of the refuge designated as Wilderness Area.
- (2). *Upland Game Hunting*. [Reserved]
- (3) *Big Game Hunting*.

We allow the hunting of elk, white-tailed deer, and turkey on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following condition:

- (i) We allow elk, deer, and turkey hunting only during the state Controlled Hunt Program season/date for those hunters issued controlled hunt permits.
- (ii) We allow only five (5) rounds of ammunition per day during controlled elk and white-tailed deer hunts.
- (iii) We allow elk and deer hunting with centerfire rifle only. Minimum calibers are .243 for deer and .270 caliber for elk.
- (iv) You must possess only federally approved non-toxic shot while in the field while hunting turkey.

(v) All harvested elk and deer must be checked through the refuge check station and a metal transportation tag attached before leaving refuge property.

(vi) We only allow use of archery equipment and shotgun or muzzleloader with a shot size of #2 or smaller for turkey hunting. Crossbows are prohibited.

(vii) Feral hogs and coyote may only be taken during controlled hunts with weapons approved for that hunt.

(viii) No hunting is allowed within 400 feet of any paved road, parking area, or building/dwelling.

(ix) The conditions set forth at paragraphs (i)(1)(x), (i)(1)(xi) and (xiii).

C. Relevant State Regulations

Hunter Safety Training – Eligible youth hunters must have passed a state certified hunter education program and all hunters are required to attend a mandatory refuge safety and orientation briefing at the refuge visitor center on the day prior to their drawn hunt.

D. Other Refuge Rules and Regulations for Hunting

1. Age – Big Game Hunting would be restricted to hunters 16 years of age and older for deer hunts and 18 years of age and older for elk hunts. Youth turkey hunters must be accompanied by, and in the immediate presence of, a non-hunting mentor 21 years of age or older during the entirety of the hunt.
2. Equipment – The refuge will permit the use of legal sporting arms, including shotguns (muzzle-loading shotguns also allowed) fired from the shoulder no larger than 10 gauge firing shot, holding no more than 3 shells, and archery equipment excluding crossbows in accordance with State regulations. Auto-loading and pump shotguns will have 1 shell in the chamber and 2 in the magazine as prescribed under state guidelines. Non-toxic shotgun ammunition is required.
3. Fires on the refuge – open fires are not permitted on the refuge.
4. License and Permits – Drawn hunters for controlled hunts will receive an official ODWC letter stating that they have been drawn to participate in specific hunt. This letter will serve as their refuge permit. All youth hunters must possess a certificate of completion for a state-approved hunter education course. Waterfowl hunters must possess all necessary federal and state required licenses and stamps, along with a signed refuge tearsheet.

5. Reporting Harvest – All harvested big game will be checked in at the hunter check station by refuge staff. Self-reporting of Turkey hunt success and biological information may be required as a condition of controlled hunts.
6. We require all hunters and designated helpers to wear at least 400 square inches of blaze orange on the head, chest, and back while in the field during all refuge elk and deer hunts.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting Program

The refuge has a list of local media contacts for all news releases. A public notice may be released in conjunction with hunting seasons and posted to the refuge website and social media. In addition, information about the hunts will be available at the refuge headquarters, visitor center, and on the refuge website.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunting Program

Based on comments received during the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (2009), hunting has already been allowed on the refuge for many years and little negative reaction is expected regarding the continuation or expansion of controlled elk and deer hunts. However, we expect some negative public response to the turkey and waterfowl hunts. Some individuals may have concerns with spring turkey hunting in the public use area as this season is during some of the highest public use periods on the refuge.

C. How Hunters Will be informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations

General information regarding hunting and other wildlife-dependent public uses can be obtained at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge headquarters at 32 Headquarters Rd, Indianola, OK 73522, or by calling 580-429-3222. Dates, forms, hunting unit directions, maps, applications, and permit requirements about the hunt will be available on the station website at: www.fws.gov/refuges/wichitamountains and at the refuge visitor center.

VI. Compatibility Determination

A draft compatibility determination has been completed in conjunction with this hunt plan and the Environmental Assessment. Hunting and all associated program activities proposed in this plan are expected to be found compatible with the purposes of the refuge.

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