

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Hunting of Migratory Birds and Resident Game.

Refuge Name: Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:

Refuge - Date Established: October 8, 1976, Public Law 94-466

Waterfowl Production Areas - Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act of March 16, 1934 as amended by section 3 of the Act of August 1, 1958 (72 Stat. 486, 16 U.S.C. sec. 716 d(c)), authorized the Secretary of Interior to acquire small wetland or pothole areas suitable as Waterfowl Production Areas.

FmHA fee title transfer properties - Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

Refuge Purpose(s):

Refuge - The Secretary shall develop and administer ... the refuge, in accordance with the National Wildlife Refuge System Act ... The Secretary may also exercise any other authority available to him for the conservation and management of wildlife and natural resources, the development of wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, wildlife interpretation, and environmental education, to the extent deemed by him to be appropriate ... The Secretary shall construct, administer and maintain, ... a wildlife interpretation and education center ... to promote environmental education and to provide an opportunity for the study and enjoyment of wildlife in its natural habitat.

Waterfowl Production Areas – ...as Waterfowl Production Areas subject to...all of the provisions of such Act [Migratory Bird Conservation Act]...except the inviolate sanctuary provisions...and ...for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.

FmHA fee title Transfer properties – ...for conservation purposes...

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:

This Compatibility Determination updates and supersedes the Compatibility Determination developed concurrently with the Refuge's January, 2012, Hunting Chapter of the Visitor Services Plan and authorized in 2012. This Compatibility Determination allows public hunting for wildlife on Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge lands (Figure 1) for migratory birds and resident game.

In the 2015 Hunting Chapter, the Service is not opening any new lands to hunting that were closed to hunting under previous Chapters, nor does this Chapter revision open any recently acquired lands to hunting. The 2015 Hunting Chapter maintains hunting activities on previously acquired lands and allows the general public to participate in populations management hunts on some areas previously open only to special hunts for underserved populations, as noted below (Figure 2). Also noted below are species open to hunting on refuge lands. The types of hunting activities allowed on the Refuge remain unchanged although periodic population management hunts for overabundant species have been added to the Hunting Chapter of the Visitor Services Plan for 2015 and beyond. The decision to implement a population management hunt in any particular year or any particular location is to be based on an evaluation of animal densities as well as on-refuge habitat conditions and off-refuge concerns, deer-car collisions for example.

State seasons and limits apply for all Refuge specified species on designated areas of the Refuge.

Those species are as follows:

- A. Migratory Game Birds: waterfowl (i.e., goose, duck, and merganser), moorhen, coot, rails, woodcock, common snipe, and mourning dove.
- B. Upland Game: ruffed grouse, gray partridge, ring-necked pheasant, gray squirrel, fox squirrel, eastern red squirrel, snowshoe hare, cottontail rabbit, jackrabbit, wild turkey, American crow, coyote, red fox, gray fox, raccoon, opossum, and striped skunk.
- C. Big Game: white-tailed deer.

The Refuge is closed to hunting for species not listed as open. Species not open to hunting on the Refuge include swans, cranes, and all other species not listed as open including species designated as unprotected by state regulations.

Where hunting on the Refuge is allowed, it follows the season dates and bag limits in the State regulations. Other state regulations incorporated into the Refuge hunting program include all methods of take legal in Minnesota (i.e., firearms, archery, falconry), all weapons and ammunition restrictions (e.g., caliber and loads), and all state-regulated special seasons (e.g., early goose, youth deer, youth turkey, youth waterfowl, metro seasons) unless otherwise restricted by Refuge-specific regulation.

All hunting activity is subject to Refuge-specific regulations in addition to State regulations. When Refuge-specific regulations and State regulations differ, the Refuge-specific regulations will apply.

State hunting regulations applicable to the Refuge, such as seasons, bag limits, and general methods of take are published annually in the Minnesota Hunting and Trapping Regulations Handbook. In addition, a synopsis of Refuge-specific regulations is made available to the public in the Refuge's hunting brochure. Copies of the hunting brochure are available at the Refuge's Visitor Centers, unit entrance kiosks, and on the Refuge internet website.

Where the Refuge is open for firearms deer hunting, single projectile ammunition is allowed for this purpose. This includes the following Units: Louisville Swamp (south of Middle Road), Rapids Lake, Jessenland, and Blakeley. Due to the short duration and well publicized nature of deer firearms season, combined with the closure trails and other high-use areas to all hunting activities, the use of single projectile ammunition for deer hunting will not cause safety issues or conflicts with other refuge uses.

For upland game hunting, .17 cal. rimfire and .22 cal. rimfire single projectile ammunition is allowed on the Jessenland and Blakeley Units. Single projectile ammunition for upland game hunting is prohibited on other, more urban units for safety reasons related to the character of the units and the high potential for conflicts with on-unit and off-unit activities. The Units where single projectile ammunition for upland game hunting is prohibited are Round Lake, Long Meadow Lake, Black Dog, Bloomington Ferry, Wilkie, Upgrala, Chaska, Louisville Swamp, Rapids Lake, and St. Lawrence.

Only non-toxic shot may be used or possessed where hunting migratory bird and upland game, including turkey, with a shotgun is allowed.

Falconry is allowed on all Refuge Units that are open to general public hunting according to State regulations.

Certain Refuge units and parts of units would be open only to Refuge-specific special hunts. A Refuge-specific special hunt is an activity focused on certain populations of hunters to provide them with additional hunting opportunities. The populations targeted for these hunts are youth hunters and hunters with disabilities or other underserved hunter populations. Refuge-specific special hunts are conducted within the framework of the State seasons and regulations for the species proposed to be hunted.

Providing access for persons with disabilities and youth to Refuge facilities and compatible wildlife-dependent public uses, including hunting, is a high priority for the Refuge. Providing access to the Refuge by persons with disabilities typically entails granting exemptions to Refuge regulations for the purpose of enabling those persons to engage in compatible activities on the Refuge. The most common type of exemption given will be authorizations of limited duration which allow the use of motorized vehicles on existing roads and trails. Other exemptions could be related to the conduct of the hunt, such as use of certain weapons and accessories. All exemptions granted will comply with the general public safety regulations of the Department of Interior and the specific public safety guidance of the Service Compatibility Policy. The Refuge

currently maintains facilities on the Long Meadow Lake, Bloomington Ferry, Wilkie, Upgrala, Chaska, and Rapids Lake Units for persons with disabilities where the Refuge has constructed and maintains accessible blinds.

Hunting is allowed on designated areas of the Refuge as follows:

Round Lake Unit

Closed to all hunting including Refuge-specific special hunts.

Long Meadow Lake Unit (Figure 3)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.

Black Dog Unit (Figure 3)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.

Bloomington Ferry Unit (Figure 4)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.

Wilkie Unit (Figure 4)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.

East of Eagle Creek (i.e., Continental Grain Marsh)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts

West of Eagle Creek to Highway 169 (i.e., Rice Lake)

- Migratory Birds
 - Open only to hunting goose, duck, merganser, moorhen, coot, and rails.
 - Closed to hunting mourning dove, snipe, and woodcock.
 - Closed to State spring season light goose hunting.
- Upland Game
 - Closed to firearms hunting.
 - Closed to hunting crow.

- Big Game
 - Closed to firearms hunting.
- Furbearers
 - Closed to firearms hunting

West of Highway 169 (including Fisher and Blue Lakes)

- Migratory Birds
 - Open only to Refuge-specific hunts.
- Upland Game
 - Closed to firearms hunting.
 - Closed to hunting crow.
 - Closed to State spring season light goose hunting.
- Big Game
 - Closed to firearms hunting.
- Furbearers
 - Closed to firearms hunting

Upgrala Unit (Figure 5)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.

Chaska Unit (Figure 6)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.

Louisville Swamp Unit (Figure 7)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.

North of Middle Road

- Migratory Birds
 - Open only to Refuge-specific hunts.
- Upland Game
 - Closed to firearms hunting.
 - Closed to hunting crow.
- Big Game
 - Closed to firearms hunting.

South of Middle Road

- Migratory Birds
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to hunting crow.
- Big Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Furbearers
 - Closed to firearms hunting

Rapids Lake Unit (Figure 7)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Migratory Birds
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to hunting crow.
- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Furbearers
 - Closed to firearms hunting

St. Lawrence Unit (Figure 8)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Migratory Birds
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to hunting crow.
- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Closed to firearms hunting.
- Furbearers
 - Closed to firearms hunting

Jessenland Unit (Figure 9)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Migratory Birds
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.

- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Furbearers
 - Open to hunting according to Refuge-specific regulations.

Blakeley Unit (Figure 9)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.

- Migratory Birds
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Big Game
 - Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.
 - Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting.
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
- Furbearers
 - Open to hunting according to Refuge-specific regulations.

Availability of Resources:

The annual cost of Refuge activities to attain the Hunting Program objective is an estimated \$102,103 out of an overall Refuge operating budget of about \$2,600,000. This cost includes staff (181 days, \$55,692) and operating expenses (\$46,410) for Refuge law enforcement and hunter assistance during the hunting season. This estimate also includes Refuge staff activities associated with evaluating resources available for hunting (e.g., biological assessments of target species) as well as preparing for (e.g., special signage and access) and monitoring hunting activities. The Refuge is assisted with some Refuge-specific special hunts by non-profit organizations such as Capable Partners or the Minnesota Waterfowl Association.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

The Refuge limits or excludes hunting activities on portions of certain Refuge Units to avoid or mitigate potential biological, public use, or administrative conflicts related to hunting. Staff monitors species population and harvest trends to ensure that target species can be hunted at the refuge without appreciably adversely affecting these species populations. These monitoring activities include direct observation, consultation with State and Service species specialists, and review of current species survey information and research. Recent assessments of species hunted in the vicinity of the Refuge indicate that those species are not facing a general decline. For waterfowl, the annual assessments are based upon the distribution, abundance, and flight corridors of migratory birds. The State of Minnesota manages resident game across broad landscapes and allows harvest of annual surpluses through recreational hunting. Although

hunting causes mortality and temporary disturbance to waterfowl and other wildlife, harvesting populations within the carrying capacity of existing habitat insures long-term health and survival of the species.

Spring turkey hunting has the most potential for conflicting with biological resources. A large colonial bird rookery is located on the Wilkie Unit. A one-half mile buffer around this rookery is closed to public use during the nesting season to minimize potential disturbance. This eliminates spring turkey hunting in the immediate vicinity of these vital nesting areas. Due to the dispersed and stealthy nature of turkey hunting, it presents minimal conflicts with other wildlife in the spring.

The Refuge is open during the hunting season to other priority public uses such as fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation. In order to safely provide both hunting and non-hunting recreational uses, the Refuge enforces a series of Refuge-specific hunting regulations. Hunting is either not allowed on certain units or is restricted by location or methods. On units that do support hunting, hunters may be restricted to specific types of hunts or hunting locations. On all Refuge units, hunting is not allowed on, across, or within 100 feet of any service road, parking lot or designated trail.

Refuge management activities can be accomplished without conflict with hunting activities through the use of administratively closed areas, timing of hunts, and methods of hunt.

Public Review and Comment:

The Refuge solicited public comments on the Draft 2015 Hunt Plan and EA. The drafts were made available for a 30 day review and comment period which extended from July 28, 2014, through August 27, 2014. The availability of these documents was announced via a public notice to ten print media organizations whose coverage extends beyond the geographic limits of the Refuge. The notice also was sent directly to legislators, municipal officials, agency contacts, and non-governmental organizations. The availability of the draft Hunting Plan and EA were announced on the Service’s Refuge, Regional, and National websites. During the comment period, the Refuge hosted two “listening station” events at the Bloomington Education and Visitors Center on August 5, 2014 and Rapids Lake Education and Visitors Center on August 7, 2014. At both events, the Refuge staff were available to discuss the proposed Hunt Plan and EA with any interested persons. Comments were received from state agencies and the general public. These comments were used to clarify the draft documents and were specifically responded to in the Environmental Assessment.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible With Following Stipulations

Figure 1. Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Units.

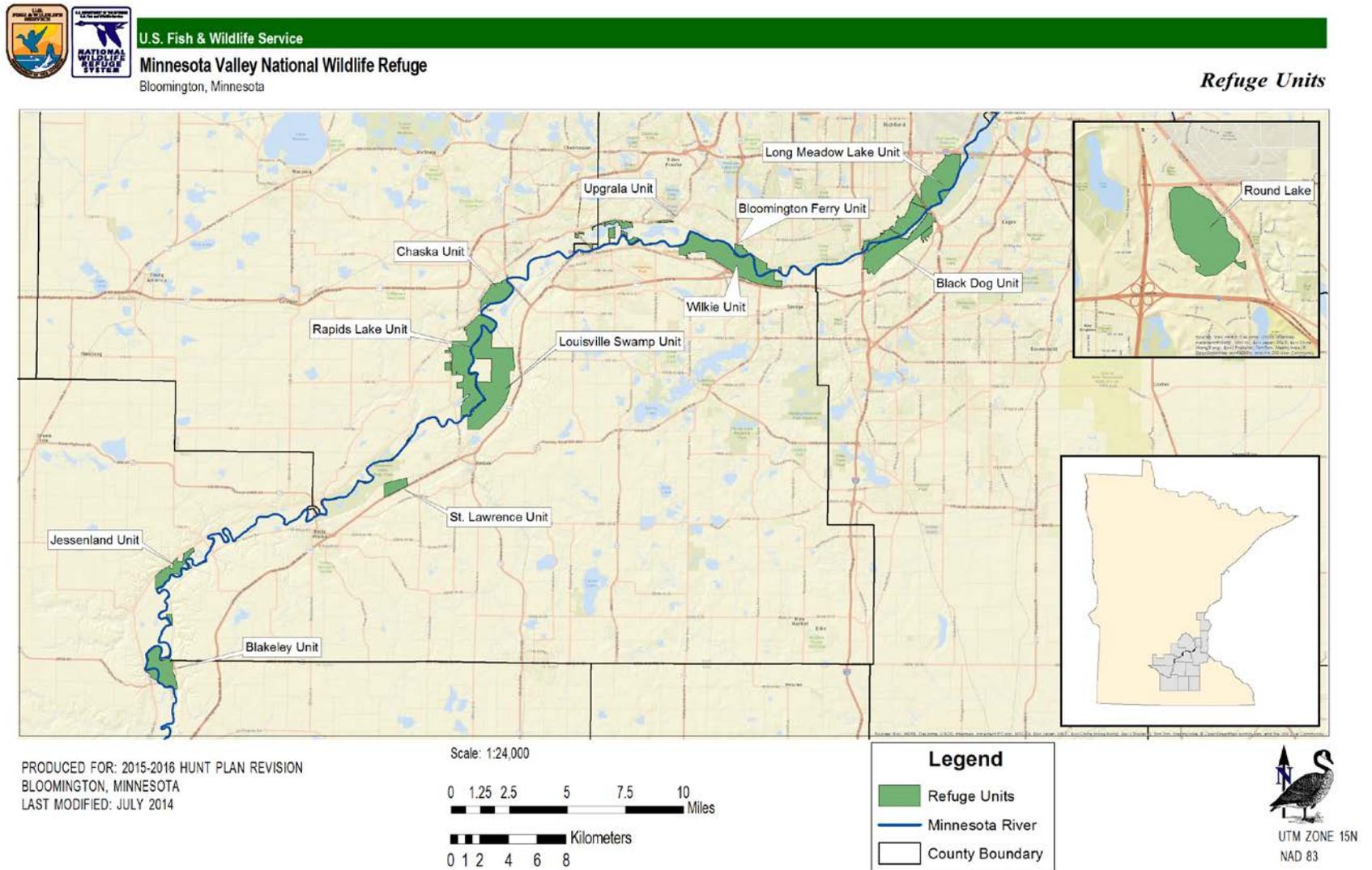


Figure 2. Units Where Special Use Permits Are Required for General Public Hunting (Population Management Hunts), Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

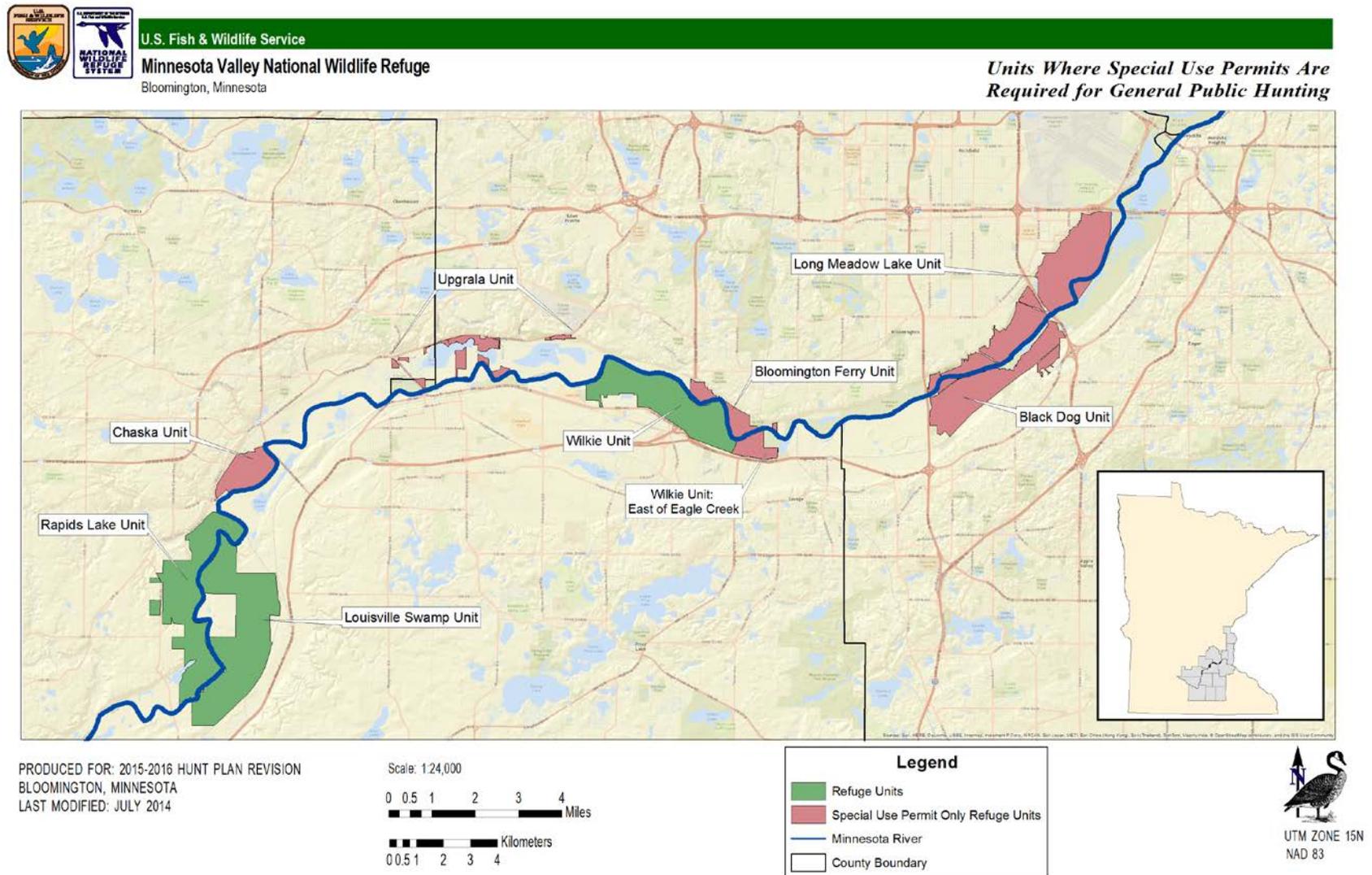
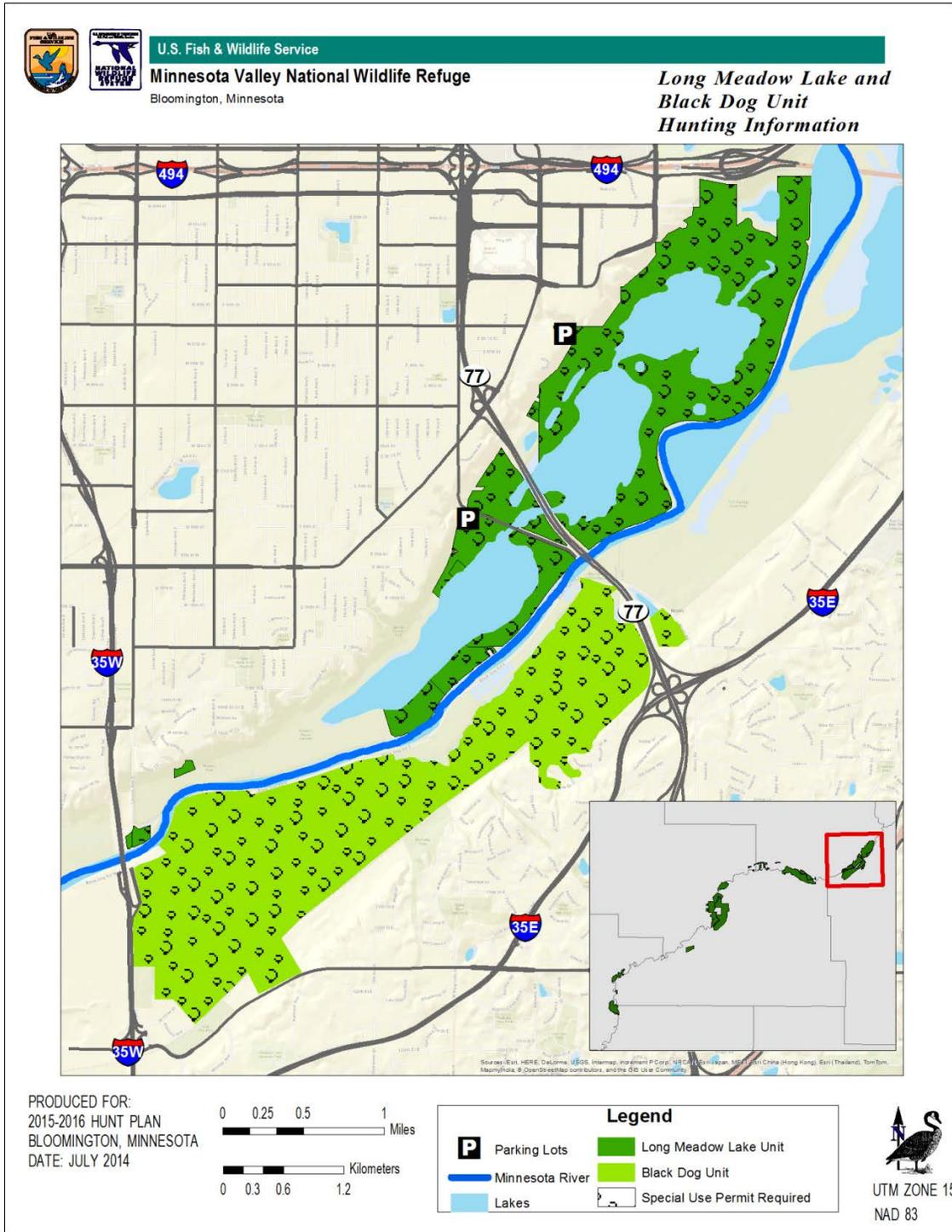


Figure 3: Long Meadow and Black Dog Unit Hunting Opportunities.



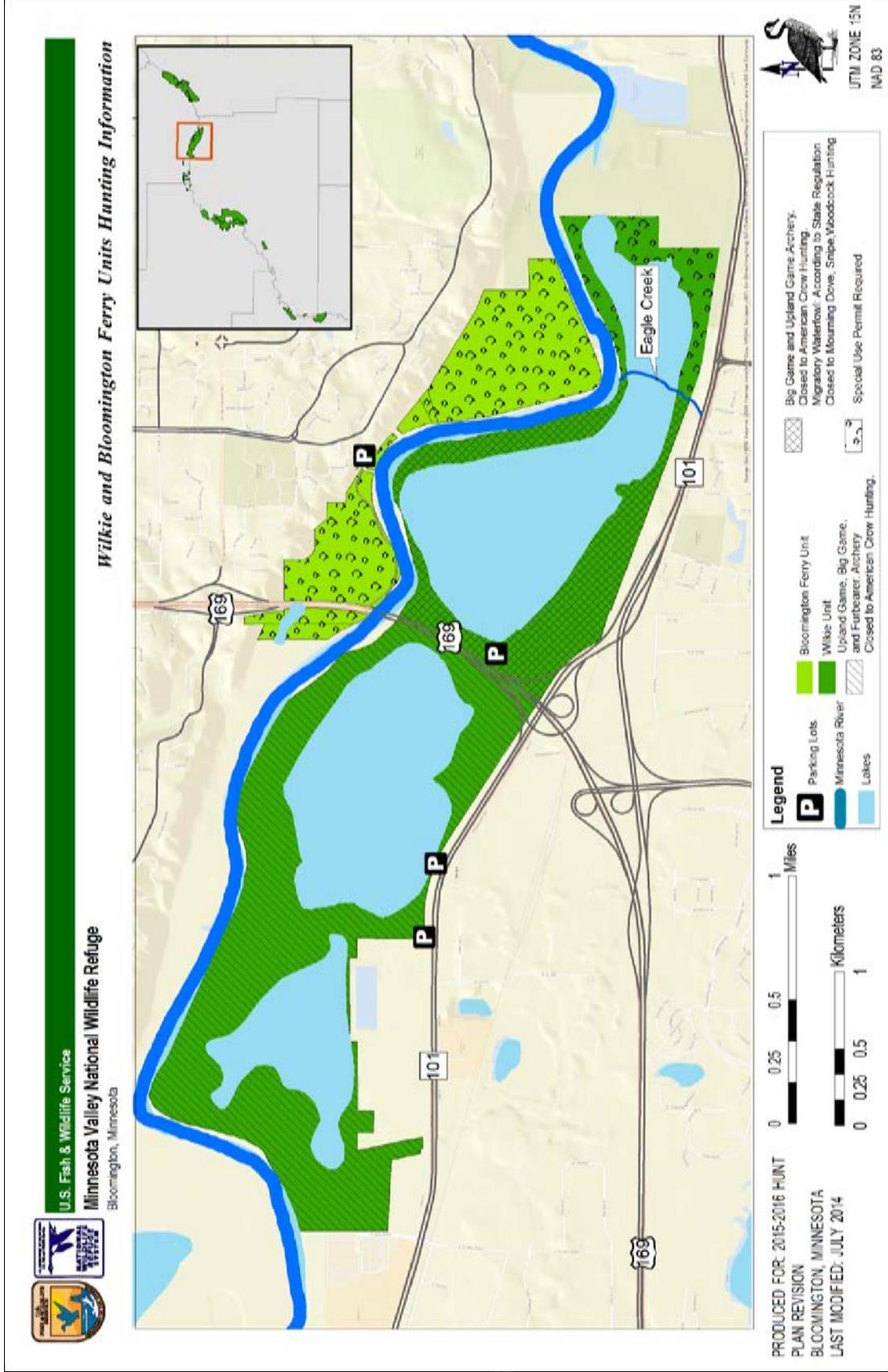
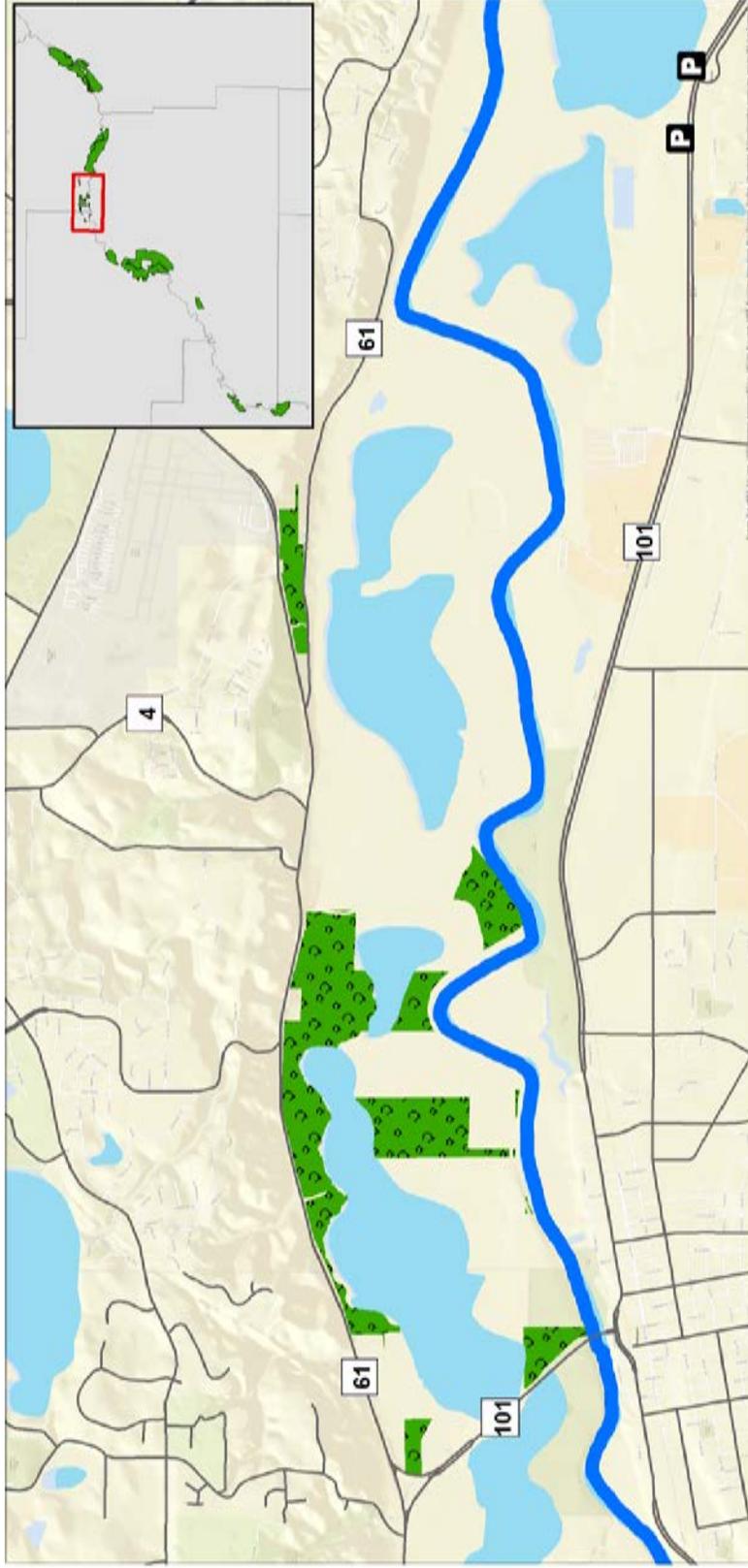


Figure 4: Wilkie and Bloomington Ferry Units Hunting Opportunities.

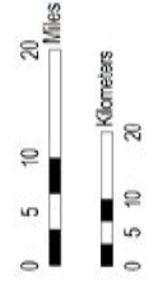


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Bloomington, Minnesota

Upgrala Unit Hunting Information



PRODUCED FOR: 2015-2016
HUNT PLAN REVISION
BLOOMINGTON, MINNESOTA
LAST MODIFIED: JULY 2014



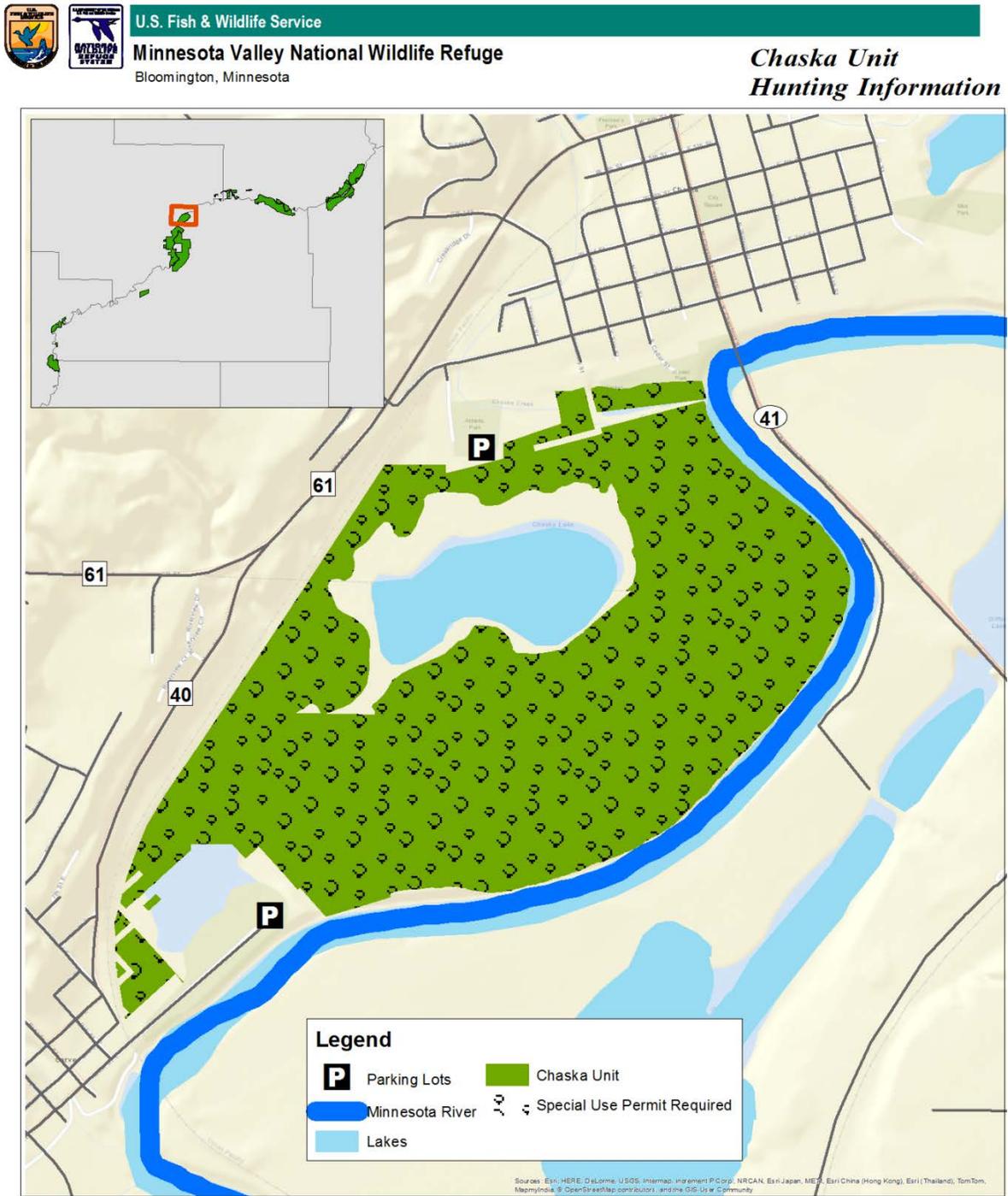
Legend

- Parking Lots
- Upgrala Unit
- Minnesota River
- Lakes
- Special Use Permit Required

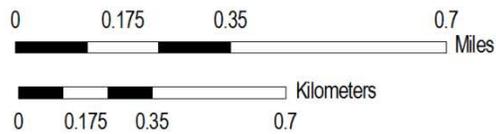


Figure 5: Upgrala Unit Hunting Opportunities.

Figure 6: Chaska Unit Hunting Opportunities.



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 2015-2016 HUNT PLAN
 BLOOMINGTON, MINNESOTA
 DATE: JULY 2014



UTM ZONE 15
 NAD 83

Figure 7: Rapids Lake and Louisville Swamp Units Hunting Opportunities.

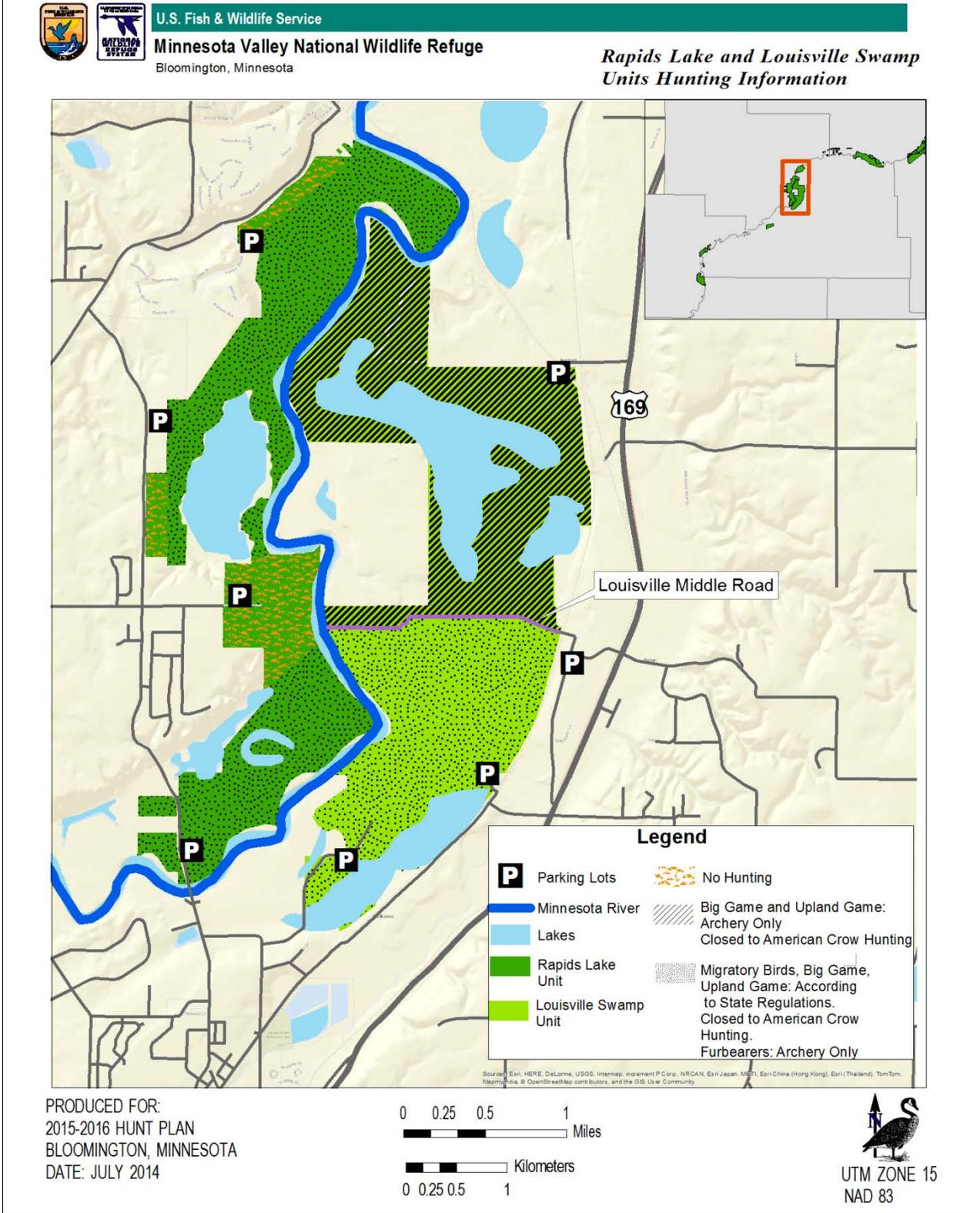
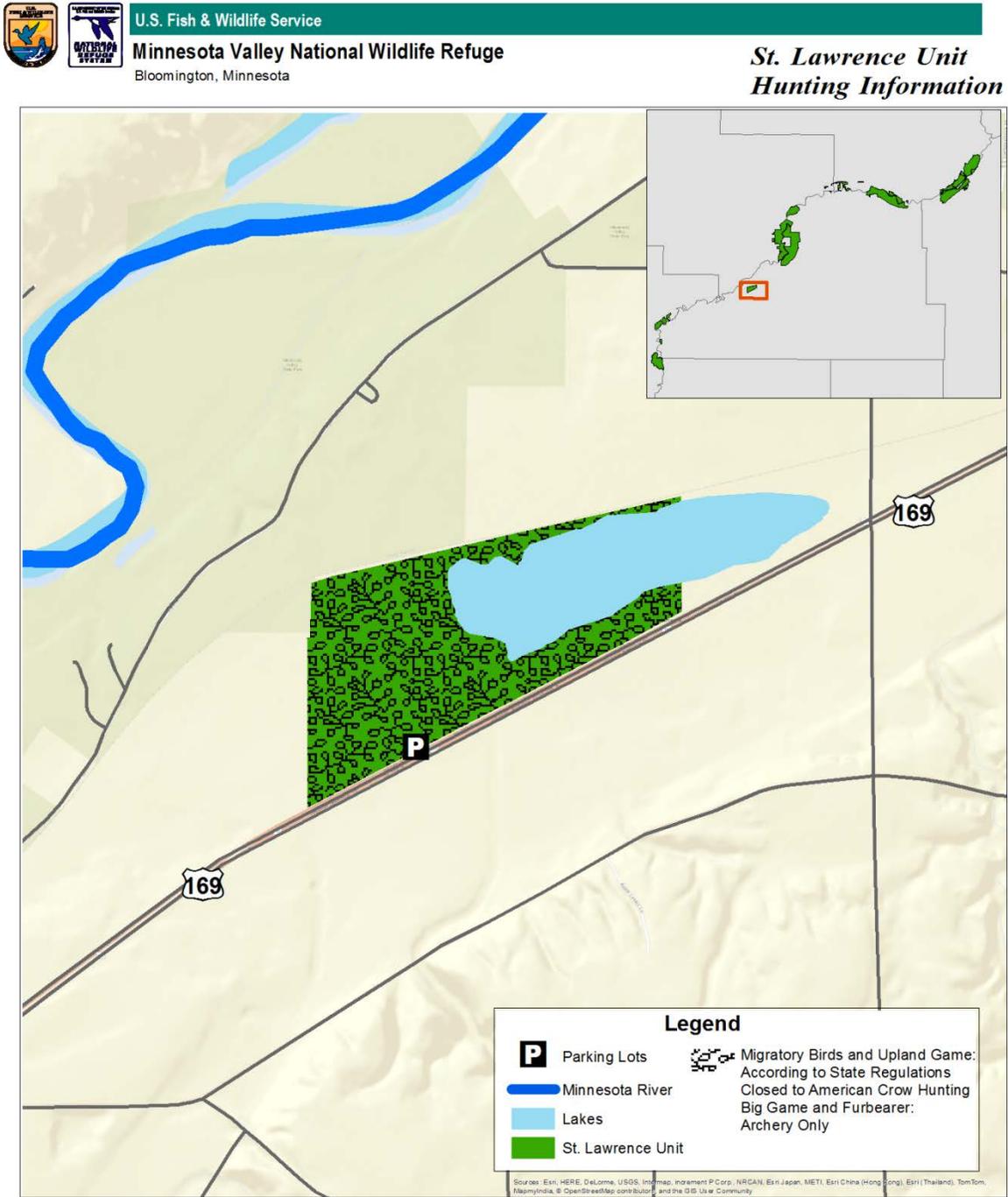
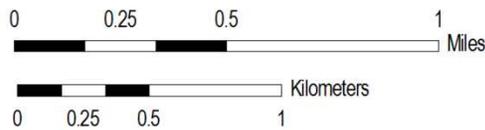


Figure 8: St. Lawrence Unit Hunting Opportunities.



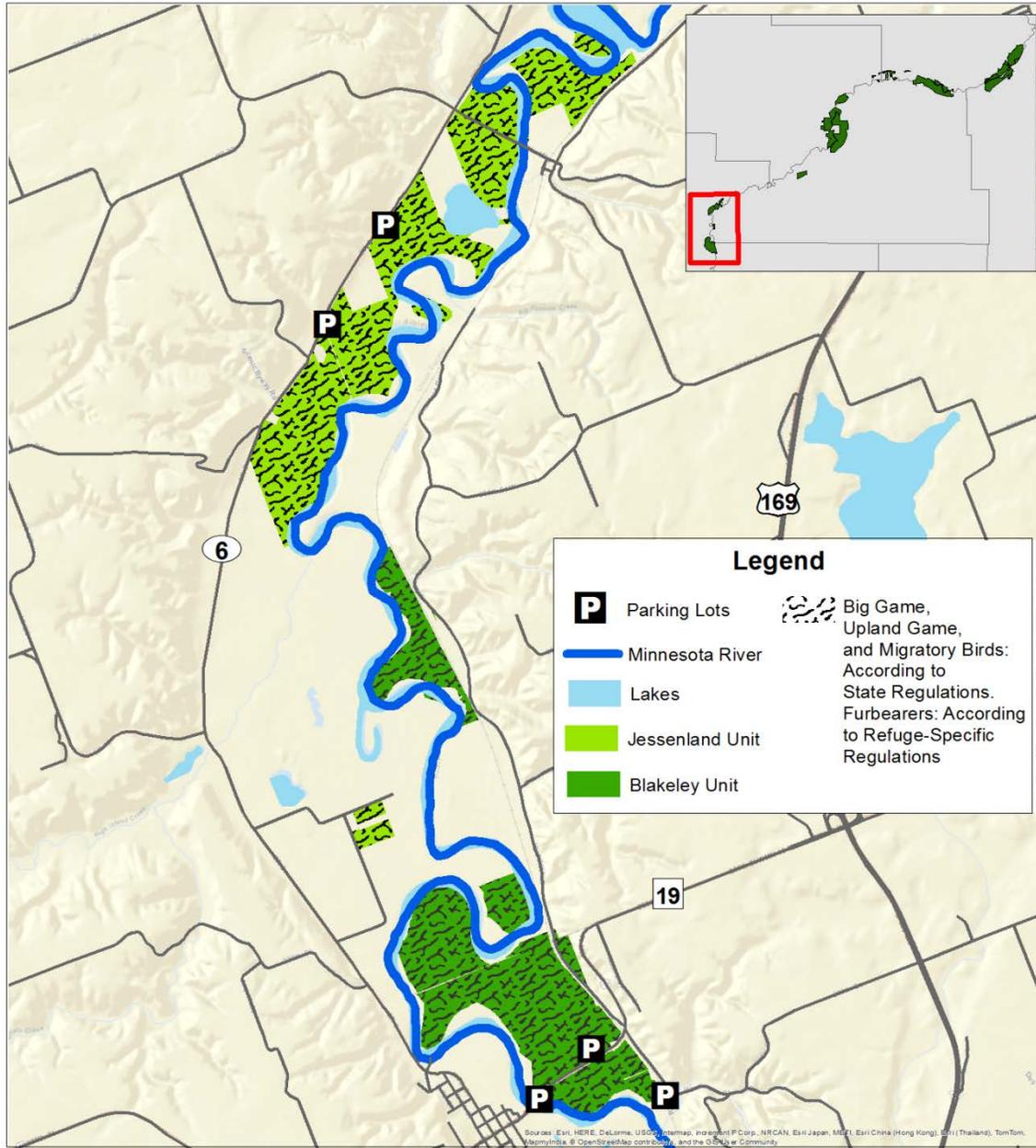
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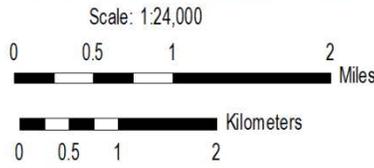
UTM ZONE 15
 NAD 83

Figure 9: Jessenland and Blakeley Units Hunting Opportunities.

Jessenland and Blakeley Units Hunting Information



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 DATE: JULY 2014




UTM ZONE 15
 NAD 83

Compatibility Determination

Regional Office Review Documentation and Routing Slip

Compatibility Determination forms, and appropriate NEPA documentation, are completed by the Project Leader in accordance with policy and following suitable public review and comment. Project Leader will sign the compatibility determination.

Are CDs part of a CCP? Yes No X

Route to	Title	Responsibility	surname/date
1	Refuge Historic Preservation Officer:	Reviews for NEPA compliance, cultural resource protection issues, and completeness of documentation.	
2	Chief, Visitor Services and Outreach:	Reviews for consistency with public use policies, and consistency with station public use management plans. Alerts Supervisor if precedent setting.	
3	Regional Refuge Biologist:	Reviews for biological soundness and consistency with principles of fish and wildlife management, and consistency with station habitat and wildlife management plans.	
4	Refuge Supervisor:	Reviews for overall consistency with Refuge Purpose, Mission, Goals and Objectives, and for overall clarity of reasoning and sound professional judgment.	
5	Division of Conservation Planning	If draft CDs are part of a draft CCP, hold signed CDs; then forward them with the final CCP to the Regional Chief.	
6	Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System:	Reviews for overall compatibility with Refuge System Mission, Regional consistency, and adherence to Service Policies. Alerts Regional Director to sensitive or potentially controversial decisions.	Signs CD
Last	Regional Historic Preservation Officer:	Signed original is returned to field station. Copy is filed with RFO files.	Files copy of CD

CD Title: Hunting of Migratory Birds and Resident Game.

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