

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 2015, Hunting Chapter of the Visitor Services Plan and authorized in 2015. 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 2016 – 2017 Hunting Chapter, the Service is opening recently acquired lands to hunting. The 2016- 2017 Hunting Chapter maintains hunting activities on previously acquired lands. The types of hunting activities and species allowed on the Refuge remain unchanged. A total of 319 acres is proposed to be opened on the following three Refuge Units: Bloomington Ferry (22 acres), Louisville Swamp (143 acres), and St. Lawrence (154 acres). Refuge specific hunting regulations on these recently acquired lands will be consistent with hunting regulations currently in place for the named units.

State seasons and limits generally 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. As noted here, the Refuge is deviating from State season dates to minimize disturbance to migrating and breeding birds. All sport hunting activities close on the Refuge on February 28 and remain closed until the following fall hunting seasons except for spring turkey season. Coyote and striped skunk are continuously open by State regulations. The Refuge will set an opening date of September 1 for hunting these species. This is consistent with other Refuges in the state. Crow hunting on the Refuge is allowed only through the State's fall season. The Refuge is closed to hunting during the State's spring light goose season to minimize disturbance to migrating and breeding waterfowl.

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., 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. We encourage hunters to voluntarily use non-toxic projectiles while hunting any species on the Refuge. However, Shotgun slugs and muzzleloader ammunition containing lead may be used when hunting big game (white-tailed deer) and furbearers.

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.

In addition, the some Refuge Units are open to general public hunting for population management hunts. Population management hunts are for the purpose of reducing the numbers of over abundant or nuisance species (e.g., white-tailed deer). Population management hunts are closed to firearms hunting. Because of the intense development surrounding these Refuge Units, a Special Use Permit is needed to better manage safety and other potential concerns of Refuge users and adjacent landowners. Anyone in the general public may apply to participate in a population management hunt, but applicants must pass an archery proficiency test and have a MNDNR bowhunter certification in order to participant in the hunt. These hunts are to occur on specific portions of specific Refuge Units. Population management hunts are not expected to occur on every Refuge Units each year and the frequency of the hunts will fluctuate year to year based on the most current species population data. We anticipate these population management hunts will be conducted primarily on the on the Long Meadow Lake, Black Dog, Bloomington Ferry, Upgrala, and Chaska Units (Figure 2). These Units historically serve as sanctuaries for white-tailed deer with resulting damage to habitat on and off-Refuge and an increased incidence of deer-car collisions on surrounding streets and highways.

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

Round Lake Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Closed to all hunting including Refuge-specific special hunts.

Long Meadow Lake Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

Black Dog Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

Bloomington Ferry Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

Wilkie Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

- Migratory Birds closed to State spring season light goose hunting.

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

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

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.
- Upland Game
 - Closed to firearms hunting.
 - Closed to hunting crow.
 - Closed to firearms hunting for “furbearers.”
- Big Game
 - 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 firearms hunting for “furbearers.”
- Big Game
 - Closed to firearms hunting.

Upgrala Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

Chaska Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

Louisville Swamp Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

North of Middle Road

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

South of Middle Road

- Migratory Birds
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to State spring season light goose hunting.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to hunting crow.
 - “Furbearers” open to hunting according to Refuge-specific regulations.
- Big Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.

Rapids Lake Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

- Migratory Birds
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to State spring season light goose hunting.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to hunting crow.
 - “Furbearers” open to hunting according to Refuge-specific regulations.
- Big Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.

San Francisco Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

St. Lawrence Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

- Migratory Birds
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to State spring season light goose hunting.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to hunting crow.
 - Closed to firearms hunting for “furbearers.”
- Big Game
 - Closed to firearms hunting.

Jessenland Unit (see map, Appendix A)

Open to Refuge-specific special hunts for migratory birds, upland game, and big game.
Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

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

- Closed to State spring season light goose hunting.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Open to crow hunting according to Refuge-specific regulations.
 - “Furbearers” open to hunting according to Refuge-specific regulations.
- Big Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.

Blakeley Unit (see map, Appendix A)

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

Open to population management hunting with a Special Use Permit.

- Migratory Birds
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Closed to State spring season light goose hunting.
- Upland Game
 - Open to hunting according to State regulations.
 - Open to crow hunting according to Refuge-specific regulations.
 - “Furbearers” open to hunting according to Refuge-specific regulations.
- Big Game
 - Open to hunting according to State 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 2016 - 2017 Hunting Chapter and EA. The drafts were made available for a 30 day review and comment period which extended from August 17, 2016 through September 16, 2016. 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, Refuge staff were available at the Bloomington Education and Visitors Center during regular business hours to discuss the proposed Hunting Chapter and EA with any interested persons.

This CD was available for public comment from. We received no comments on the proposed CD.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible With Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

- 1) We allow the hunting of only Refuge-specified species on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations subject to Refuge-specific conditions.
- 2) Hunting is prohibited on, across or within 100 feet of any service road, parking lot or trail.
- 3) For authorized hunting activities, the Refuge is open two hours before legal shooting time to one hour after legal shooting time. Camping is prohibited.
- 4) Archery, firearms, and falconry are allowed for hunting on designated areas of the Refuge.
- 5) Non-toxic shot must be used to hunt migratory birds and upland game including turkey. Hunters using shotguns for migratory birds and upland game may possess only approved nontoxic shot while in the field.
- 6) We encourage hunters to voluntarily use non-toxic projectiles while hunting any species on the Refuge. However, Shotgun slugs and muzzleloader ammunition containing lead may be used when hunting big game (white-tailed deer) and furbearers.
- 7) In designated areas, single projectile ammunition is prohibited for hunting.
- 8) The use of centerfire rifles or air guns for hunting is prohibited on the Refuge.
- 9) Refuge authorization is required for all Refuge-specific special hunts or Refuge-specific population management hunts.
- 10) Gas or electric boat motors are prohibited on the Refuge. Non-motorized watercrafts are allowed in designated areas for waterfowl hunting.
- 11) All personal property, including, but not limited to, boats, blinds, and stands, must be removed at the end of each day.
- 12) We allow the use of hunting dogs during the State-approved hunting season, provided the dog is under the immediate control of the hunter at all times. We do not allow the use of dogs for furbearer hunting.
- 13) No motorized vehicles are allowed within the hunting units except at designated parking areas or by Special Use Permit.

Justification:

Suitable habitat exists on the Refuge lands to support hunting as proposed. The viability of the game species populations proposed to be hunted will not be negatively affected by hunting according to State season guidelines, bag limits, and regulations.

This use is being permitted because it is a priority public use. It will not diminish the primary purposes for which the Refuge was established. This use is supported in the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan. It also meets the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System by providing renewable resources for the benefit of the American public while conserving viable populations of fish, wildlife and plant resources on these lands.

Waterfowl Production Areas are open to hunting by statute and regulation.

This use has been determined compatible provided the above stipulations are implemented.

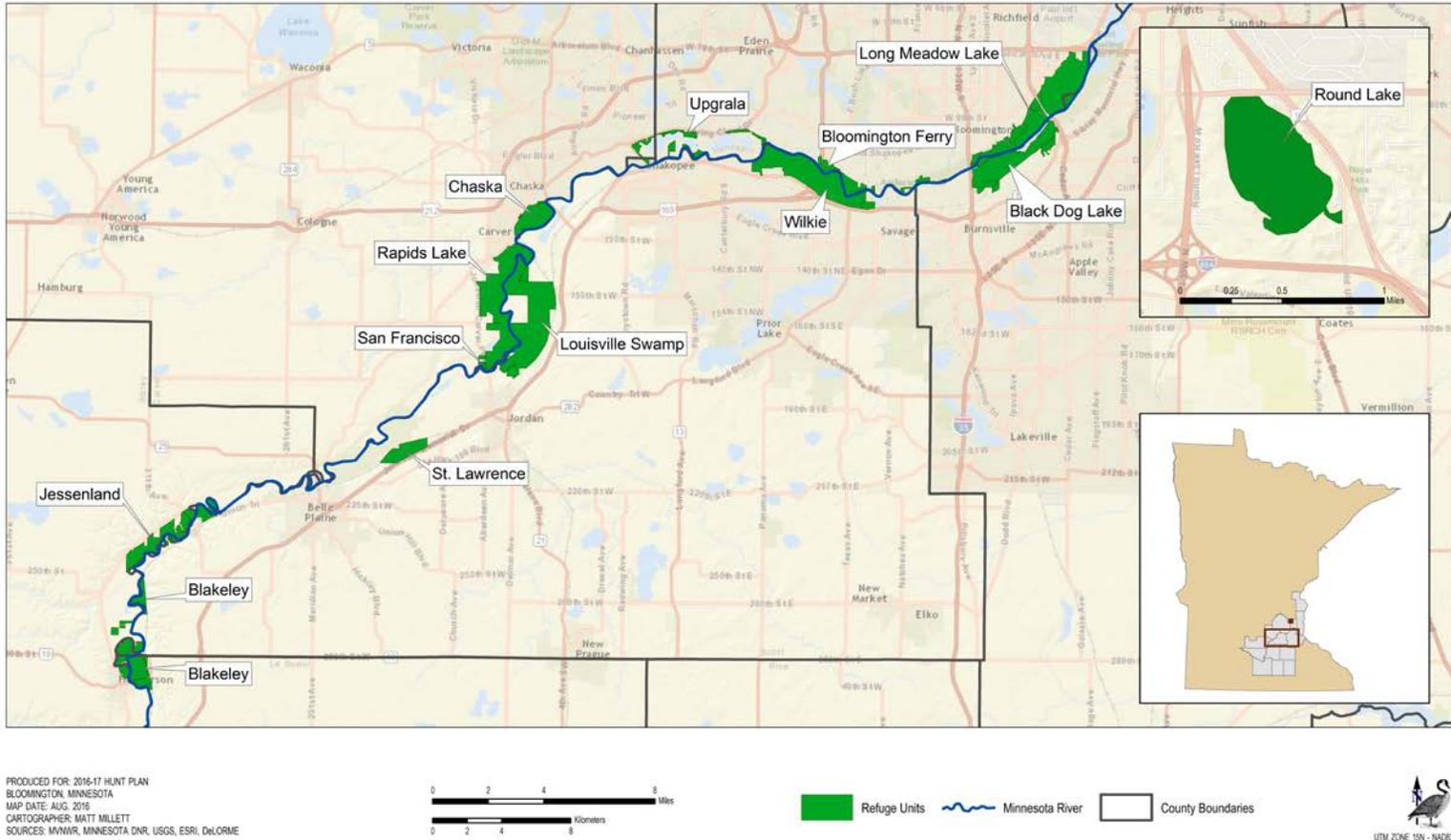


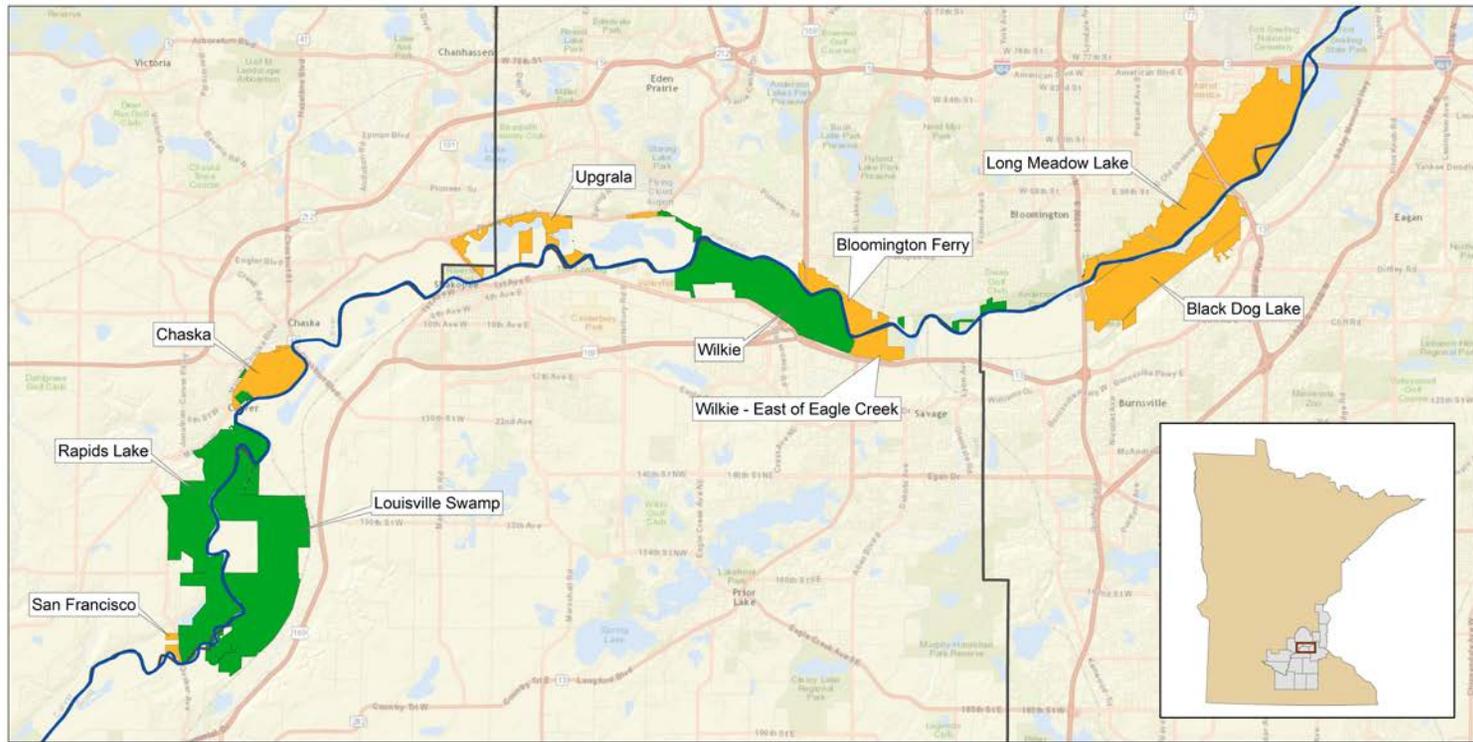
Figure 1. Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Units.



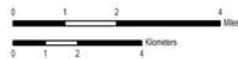
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Bloomington, Minnesota

Units Where Special Use Permits Are
Required for General Public Hunting



PRODUCED FOR: 2016-17 HUNT PLAN
BLOOMINGTON, MINNESOTA
MAP DATE: AUG. 2016
CARTOGRAPHER: MATT MILLETT
SOURCES: MNWR, MINNESOTA DNR, USGS, ESRI, DALORME

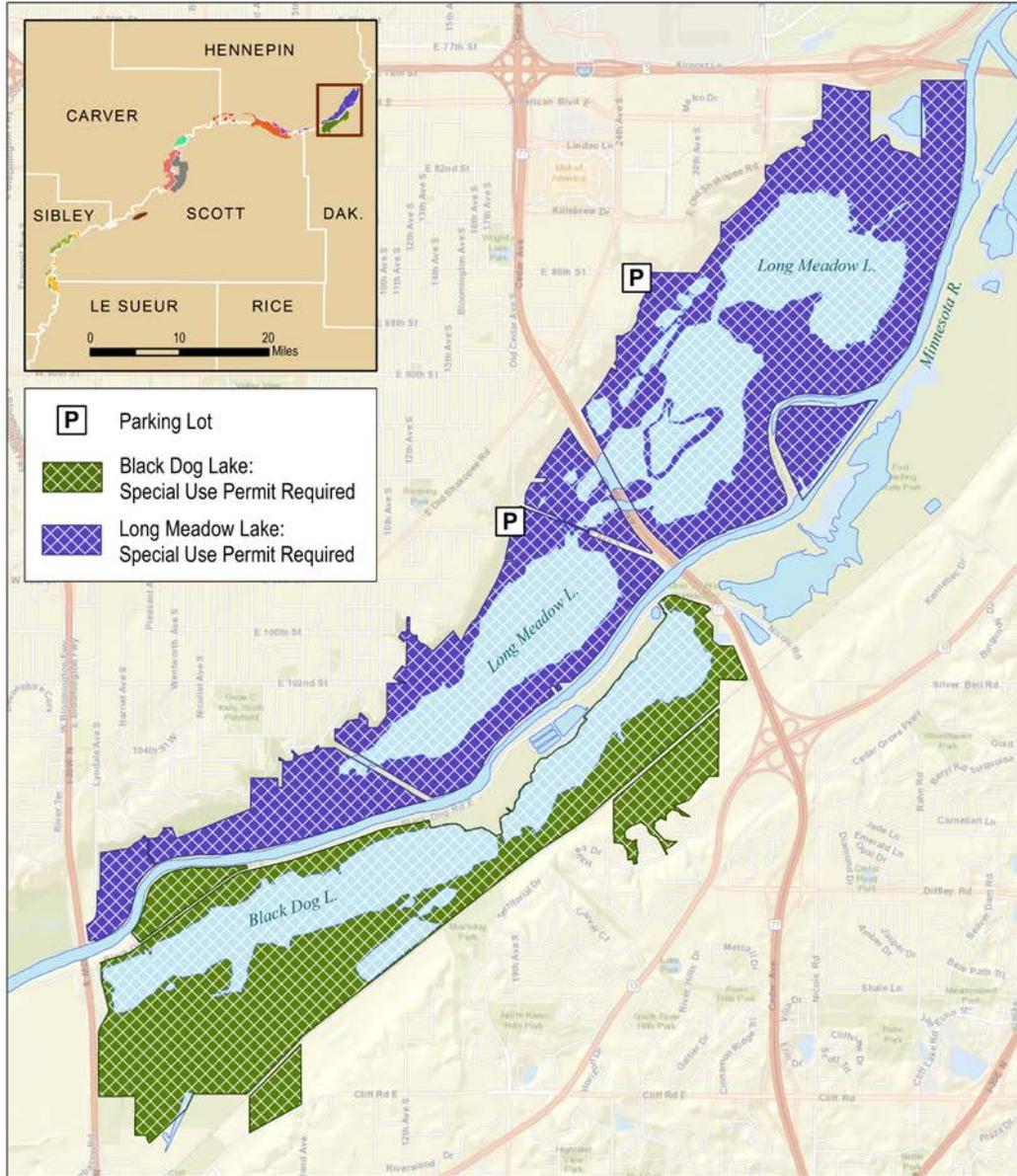


■ Refuge Units ■ Special Use Permit Required ~ Minnesota River □ County Boundaries



UTM ZONE 19N - NAD83

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



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0 0.5 1 Miles
 0 0.5 1 Kilometers


 UTM ZONE 15N - NAD83

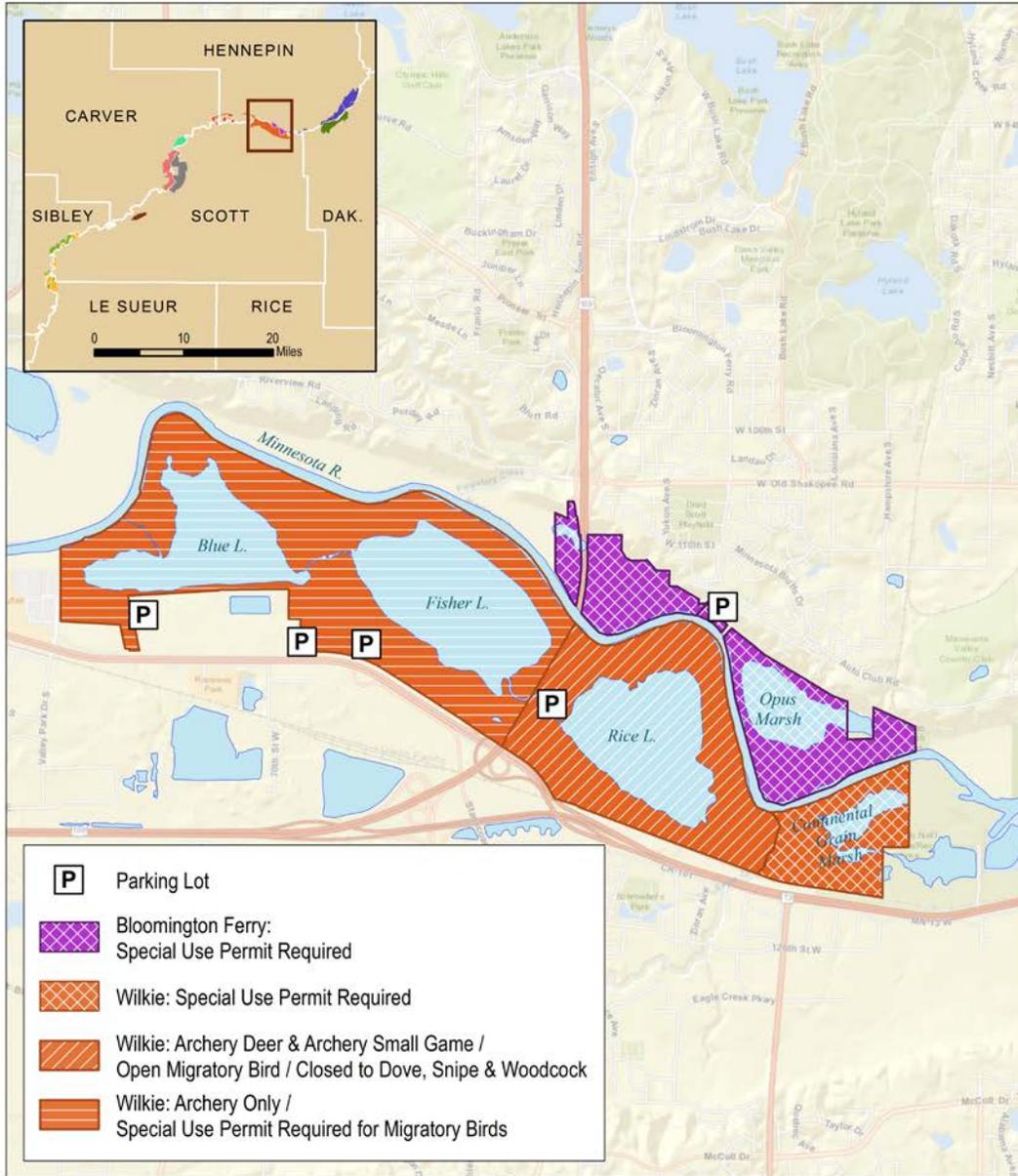
Figure 3: Long Meadow and Black Dog Units Hunting Opportunities.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Bloomington, Minnesota

*Bloomington Ferry & Wilkie Units
Hunting Information*



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SOURCES: M/NWR, MINNESOTA DNR, USGS, ESRI, DeLORME

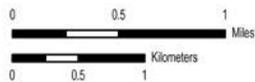


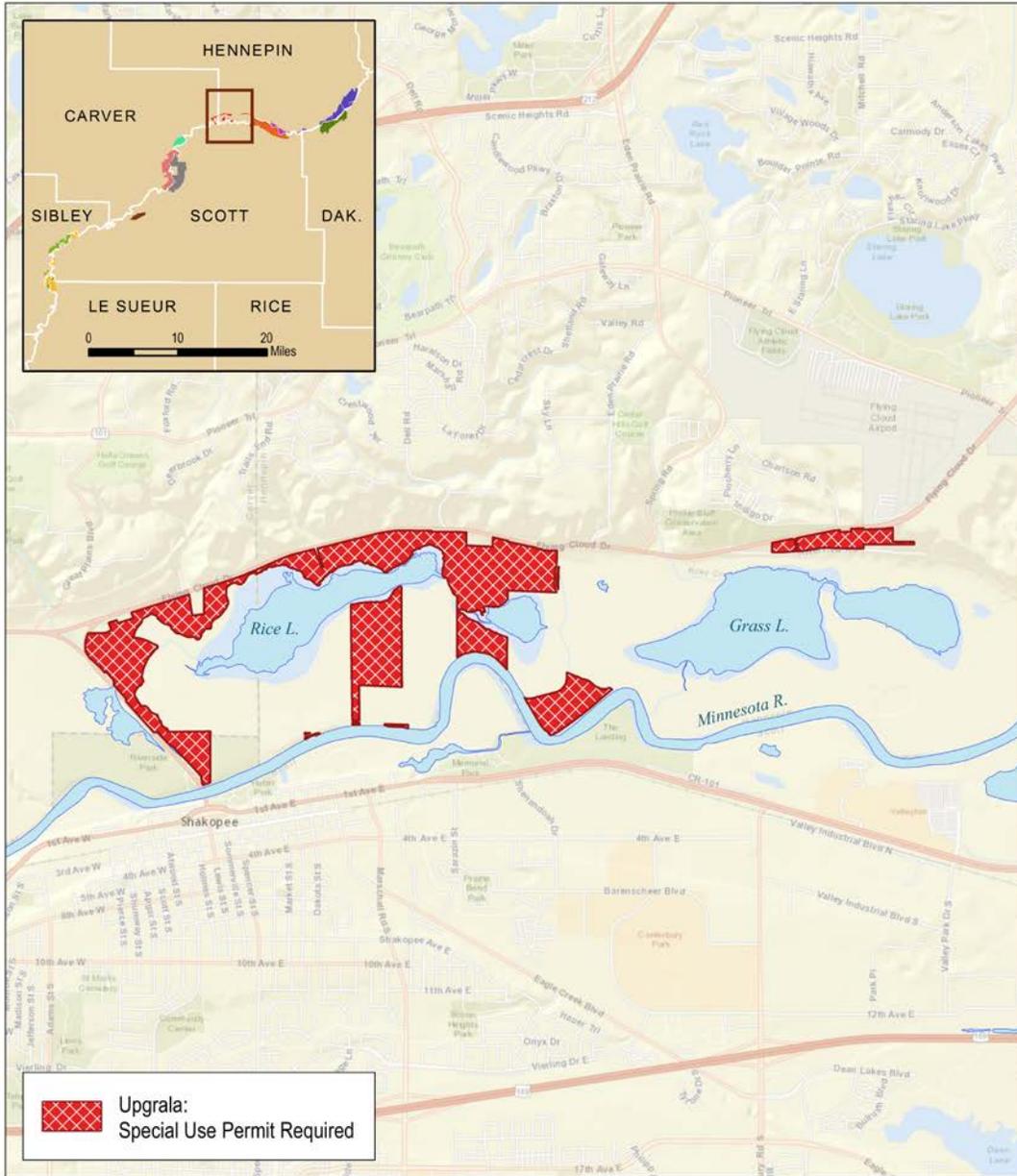
Figure 4: Bloomington Ferry and Wilkie Units Hunting Opportunities.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Bloomington, Minnesota

*Upgrala Unit
Hunting Information*



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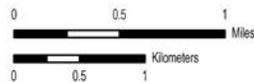
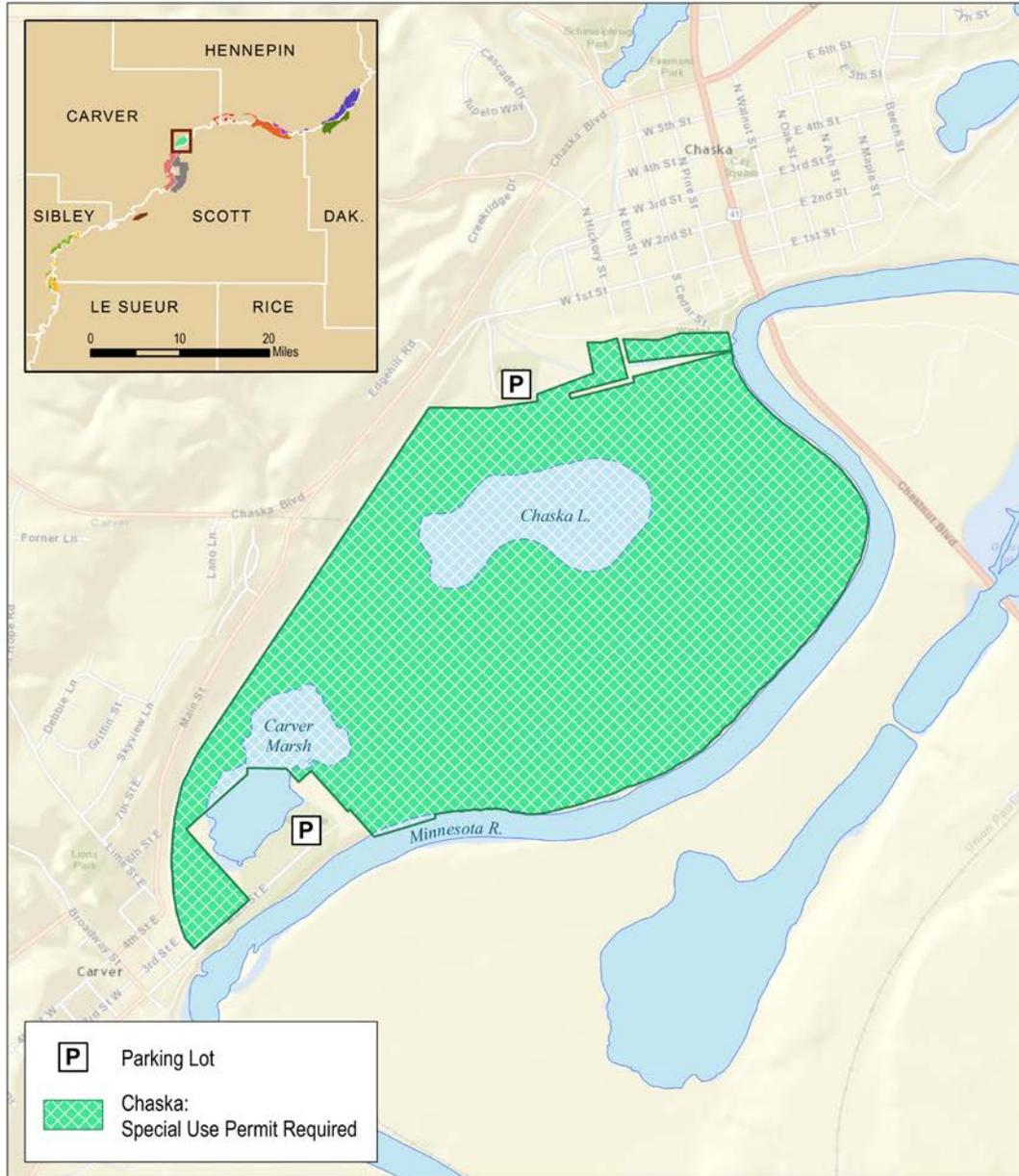


Figure 5: Upgrala Unit Hunting Opportunities.



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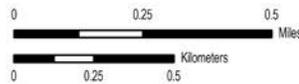


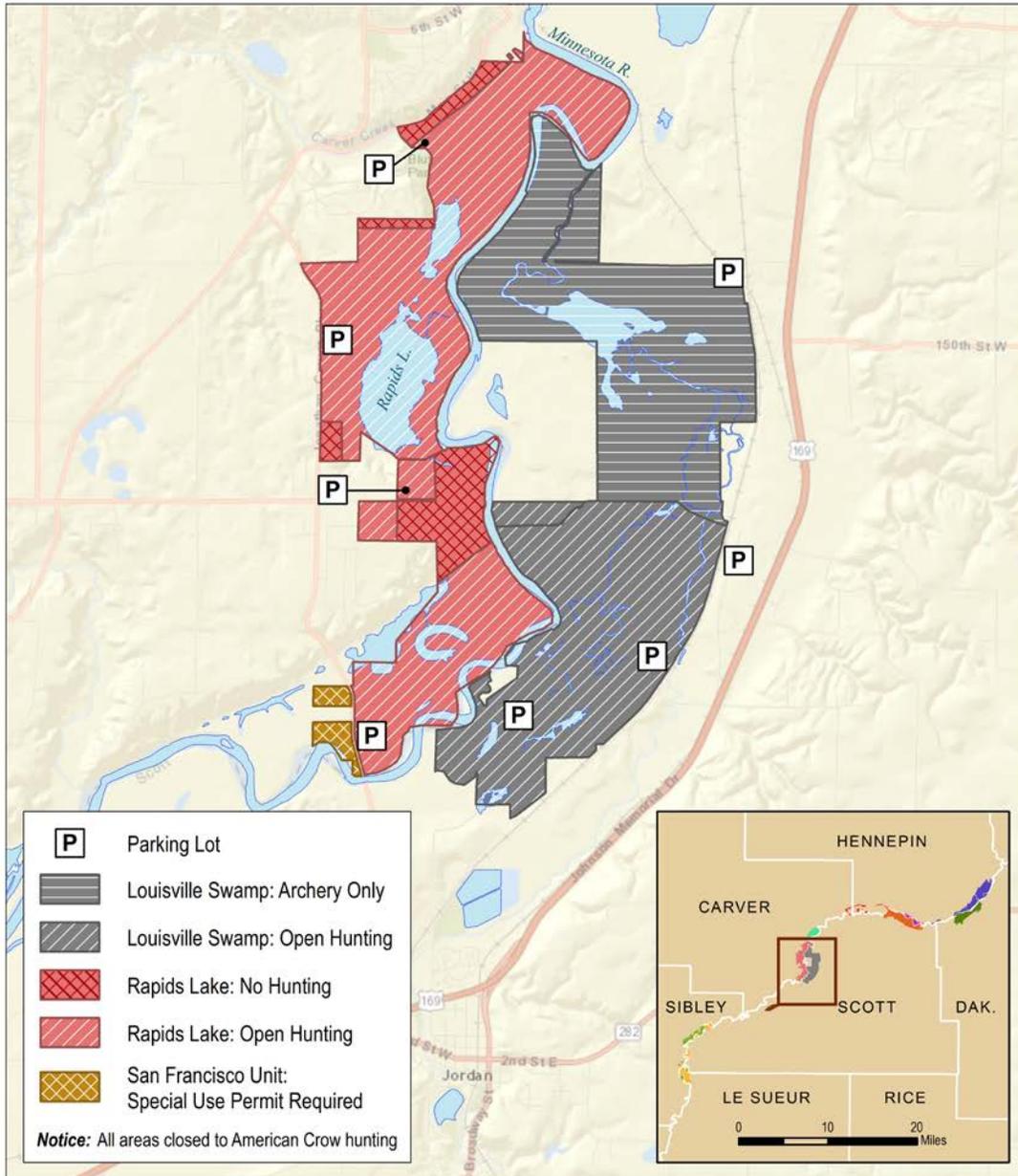
Figure 6: Chaska Unit Hunting Opportunities.



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Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Bloomington, Minnesota

*Rapids Lake, Louisville Swamp
& San Francisco Units
Hunting Information*



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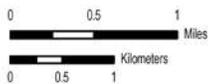


Figure 7: Rapids Lake, Louisville Swamp, and San Francisco Units Hunting Opportunities.

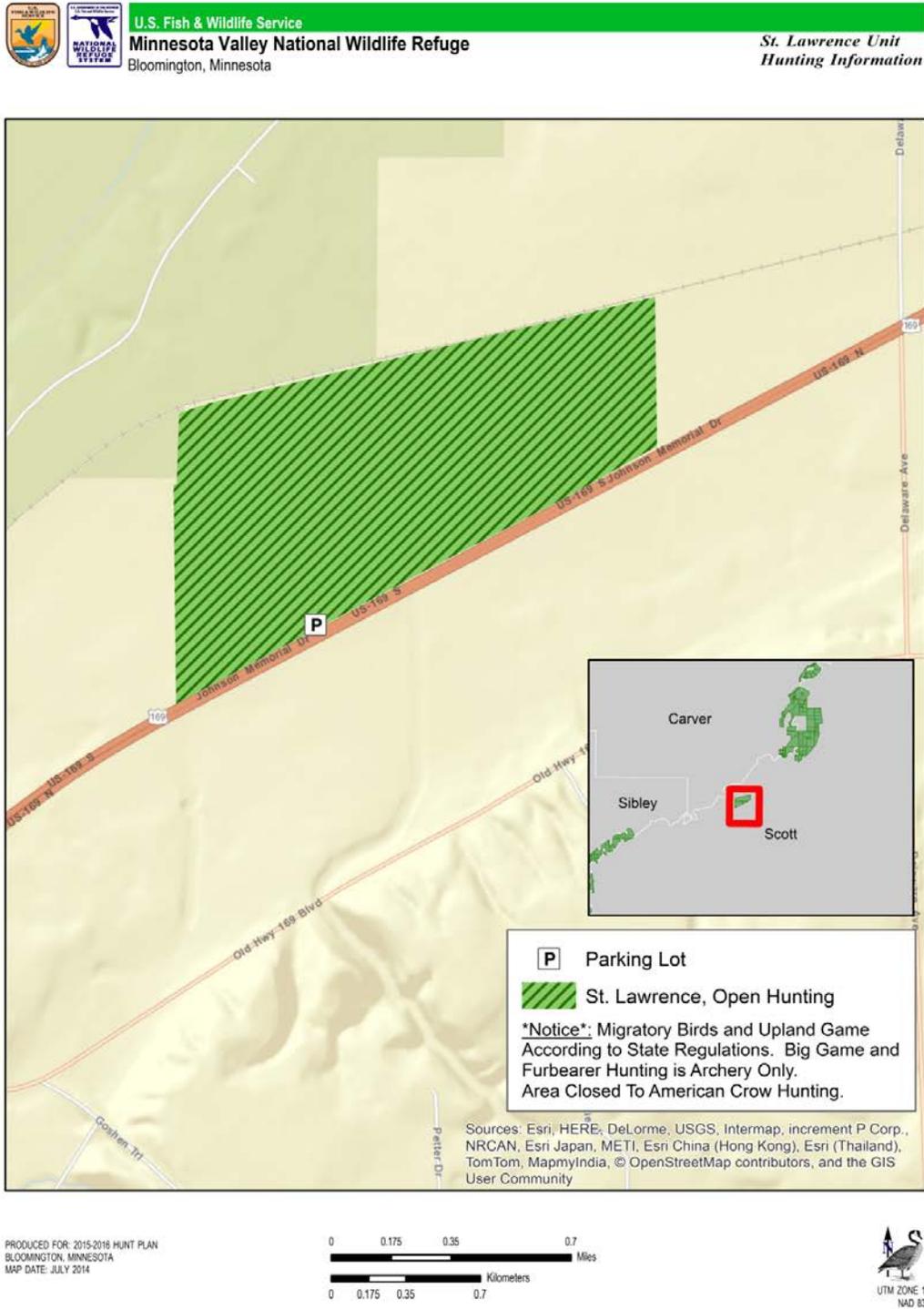


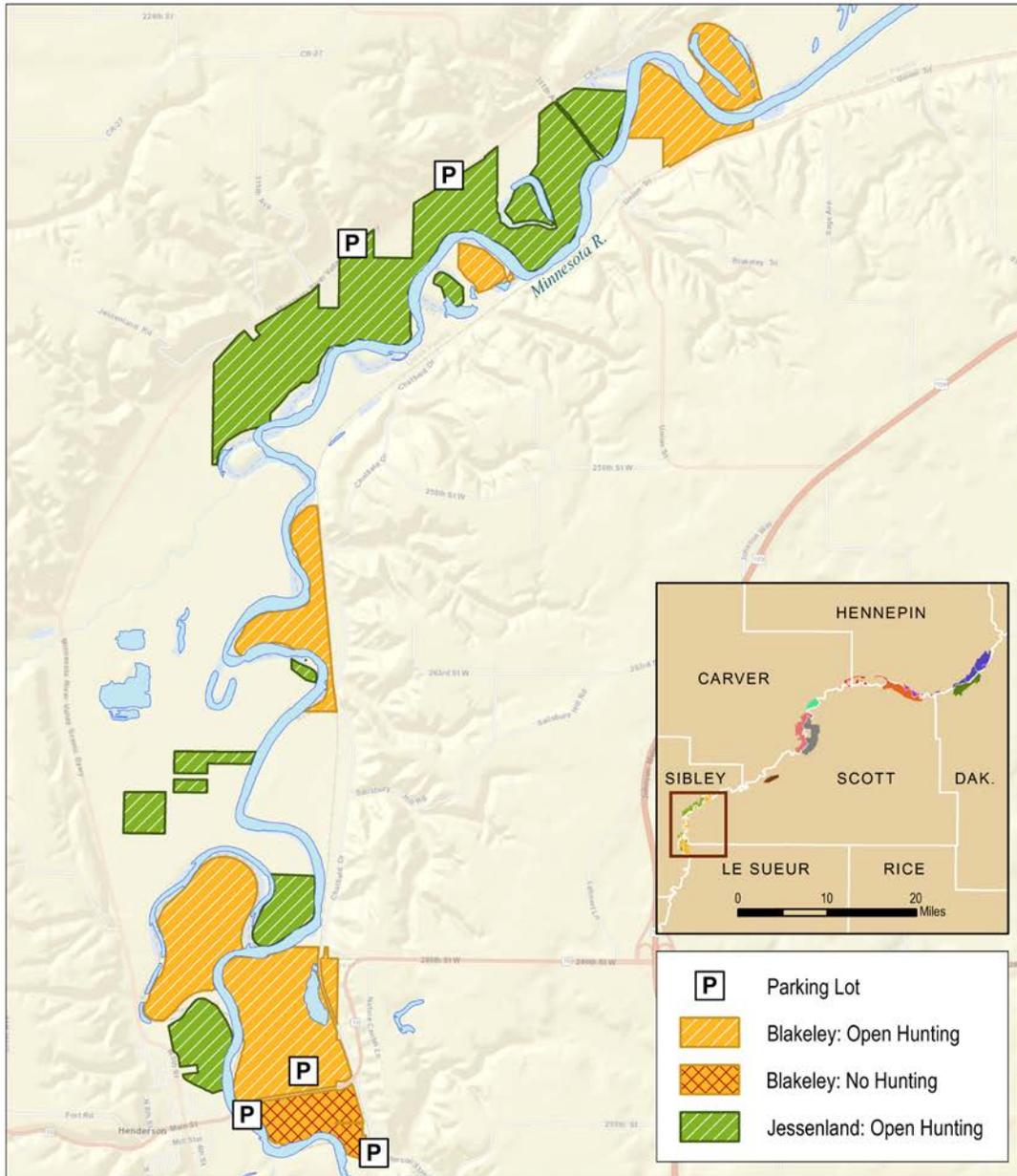
Figure 8: St. Lawrence Unit Hunting Opportunities.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge
Bloomington, Minnesota

Blakeley & Jessenland Units
Hunting Information



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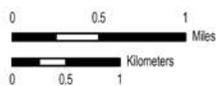


Figure 9: Jessenland and Blakeley Units Hunting Opportunities.

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.

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