

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Hiking

Refuge Name: Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authority (ies): 16 U.S.C. 715d; 16 U.S.C. 644; and 16 USC. 460k-1

Refuge Established: May 31, 2000

Refuge Authorities: 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act); 16 U.S.C. § 664 (Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act); 16 U.S.C. § 460K-1 (Refuge Recreation Act); 16 U.S.C. § 460K-2 (Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. § 460K-4), as amended); 16 U.S.C. § 3901b, 100 Stat. 3583 (Emergency Wetlands Resources Act, 1986); 16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

Refuge Purpose(s):

"..for uses as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act).

"..shall be administered by him (Secretary of the Interior) directly or in accordance with cooperative agreements...and in accordance with such rules and regulations for the conservation, maintenance, and management of wildlife, resources thereof, and its habitat thereon,..." 16 U.S.C. 664 (Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act).

"..suitable for - (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species..." 16 U.S.C. 460k-1 "..."the Secretary...may accept and use...property. Such acceptance may be accomplished under the terms and conditions of restrictive covenants imposed by donors..." 16 U.S.C. 460k-2 (Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4), as amended).

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: To provide for hiking opportunities on those Divisions of the Middle Mississippi River NWR.

Except as prohibited by appropriate 'closed area' signs or notification, areas on the Middle Mississippi River NWR are open to hiking, yearlong, with some exceptions to provide for undisturbed sanctuary for nesting American bald eagles and migrating waterfowl. On the Wilkinson Island Division hunters must comply with the Illinois and Missouri firearm blaze-orange safety requirements from October 1 to January 31 while hunting on the Refuge. It is not required, but highly recommended that hikers comply with these same rules during this time frame to avoid being mistaken by hunters as wild game.

Refuge roadways, access trails, and levees are open to hiking as well as areas of the Refuge with no defined trail systems. Insect populations in the summer months, inundation by the Mississippi River, and terrain are limiting physical factors.

Some limited interpretive signing, informational kiosks, maps provided by the Refuge, and leaflets will enhance the use on certain areas. This activity, together with appropriate interpretation, will promote community stewardship of our public lands, increase public support and awareness of our wildlife resources, and provide for increased public use opportunities in the immediate area.

Hiking activities, when properly regulated by Refuge signs and notices, will NOT conflict with other Refuge goals. It is expected to enhance overall Service image in the communities and enhance other FWS initiatives.

Availability of Resources: Funds have been available to maintain existing program level, and periodic funds have been available to adequately maintain existing roads and access trails. Additional funds and/or staff would be required to cover expanded program opportunities or facilities outlined in the CCP.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Hiking throughout the Refuge divisions will provide the public with an opportunity to view wildlife refuge programs, serve to educate and inform our visitors, and create an advocacy group supportive of our goals and purposes. Through appropriate demonstration and interpretation of programs the "hiking" public will be able to gain an understanding of the interrelationships that link wildlife with their habitats. Hiking, when properly regulated in time and space, is an environmentally friendly activity that does not detract from the area.

Controlled access and seasonal restrictions will limit any human disturbance to wildlife populations or threatened or endangered plant species.

Litter, resulting from this hiking use, is expected to be minimal and will be periodically collected by refuge staff and volunteers. Informational signage will be placed at strategic locations.

Little or no erosion or degradation of the environment is expected to take place. Vegetation should not suffer any great degree of disturbance or is expected to rebound quickly with succession being reset by the Mississippi River almost annually. Vegetation on the levees can withstand moderate to heavy use during the growing season with no ill effect, and is periodically maintained by the levee and drainage districts annually.

Public Review and Comment: Determination prepared and reviewed in conjunction with Refuge Complex Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Environmental Assessment. (Minimum 2-week notice in newspaper(s) unless use is very minor with no impacts on Refuge purpose)

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: The following stipulations are required to ensure compatibility:

1. All users must comply with refuge specific regulations.
2. Controlled access points with appropriate signs and notices will limit environmental disturbance.

Justification: Use is in compliance with the Refuge Recreation Act and furthers the goals and objectives of the Mark Twain Complex Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

The activity of hiking across portions of the Refuge, in limited numbers experienced over the past years, has resulted in no adverse effects to other refuge programs of wildlife populations. Appropriate signing and, at times, the complete closure of the Refuge division to all entry will eliminate any disturbance to or disruption of other activities/programs/populations.

Hiking makes no consumptive use of any resources and does not degrade the Refuge environment; the minimal use level does no damage to the ground cover, creates no potential for erosion (e.g. deep trails cut into hillsides or over levees) and has little disturbance impact on wildlife populations because the use is zoned as to area and time.

Signature:

Refuge Manager: _____

Jason Wilson, Refuge Manager

Date

Concurrence: _____

Charles W. Blair, Regional Chief

Date

Mandatory 10-year Re-evaluation Date: _____