

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Trapping

Refuge Name: Middle Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge

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

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." 16U.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...' 16U.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 (16U.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 conduct trapping solely for wildlife management objective on selected divisions of the Middle Mississippi River NWR in Illinois and Missouri.

Trapping will be used on the refuge as a management tool to address muskrat and beaver created problems within the Refuge infrastructure. Muskrats often burrow into roads, ditches, and dikes. The resulting holes and cave-ins along refuge roadways increases maintenance, creates safety hazards to visitors and staff, and restricts the Refuge's ability to regulate water levels. Plugging of water control regulatory devices including water control structures and damage to our delivery ditches often occurs by beaver and muskrat. Without the water regulatory ability, the Refuge cannot meet our primary goal to provide migratory bird habitat. The altered impoundments also create drainage restrictions and can potentially cause problems to neighboring private landowners. Such restriction of drainage on private property can be a violation of state law.

Trapping is not anticipated to occur on an annual basis. The infrequent need to trap will be assessed individually through a case by case determination by the refuge manager or their representative. When instituted, trapping will be very restrictive and only authorized by refuge personnel or through the issuance of a Special Use Permit (SUP). The permit offers the refuge manager the opportunity to specifically target offensive individuals and regulate trapping techniques and methods more restrictively than state regulations.

Availability of Resources: Funds have been available to conduct the limited program on refuge divisions. The CCP does not propose an expansion of this activity.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: Disturbance of resting waterfowl is a factor to be considered. The activity of a trapper on the Refuge may result in disturbance of waterfowl depending on the time of year this activity takes place; however, the disturbance is temporary in nature and confined to a minimal amount of time. Waterfowl populations become accustomed to limited activity and simply change resting areas when disturbed, but they generally do not leave the refuge during these periods. The birds quickly return to their original resting areas soon after the disturbance has ended.

The capture of non-targeted animals such as bald eagles can potentially exist. Through proper education and training, this threat can be nearly eliminated by addressing the proper location of traps, and prohibiting such techniques as exposed baits, the use of fish for bait, and multiple sets.

No negative physical impacts on refuge lands or interest are expected to occur. In fact, the ability to effectively manage for migratory birds will be enhanced. Specifically, water

management will be enhanced as water delivery improves and mast trees and bottomland, riverfront, and floodplain forests will be protected.

Visitor and staff safety will be significantly improved by the minimization of damage to refuge roadways. The Refuge's relationship with neighboring landowners will improve as we respond to their legally binding needs.

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. Trapping will only be conducted following the thorough inspection by the refuge manager or their designated representative.
2. Trapping will only occur by refuge personnel or conducted by an outside individual through the use of an SUP.
3. Compliance of the conditions of the SUP will be closely monitored by refuge staff.
4. Trapping will not occur if the population is at such low numbers that trapping may jeopardize the ability of the local population to sustain itself.
5. Trapping shall be targeted only to the species of concern.
6. A weekly "Fur Catch Report" will be completed and submitted to the refuge manager by the following Friday of each week.

Justification: Trapping on selected areas of the Middle Mississippi River NWR in the states of Illinois and Missouri has been found compatible with the purpose for which the refuge was established. Trapping is a viable management tool in reducing damage to refuge infrastructure, increasing visitor and staff safety, and ensuring compliance with private landowner drainage concerns. When the stipulations listed above are fulfilled, little or no adverse effects to other refuge programs or wildlife species will occur.

