

Draft Compatibility Determination

Use: Trapping for refuge management

Refuge Name: Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):

The Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), including the land area now managed as Port Louisa NWR, was established under the provisions of a Secretarial Order signed on August 1, 1958. Individual districts of the Mark Twain NWR were designated as separate National Wildlife Refuges in a reorganization change as part of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) in 2004 when Port Louisa NWR was named. Much of the refuge consists of lands acquired in fee title by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that are managed as part of the refuge under a Cooperative Agreement between the Department of the Army and the Department of the Interior.

Establishing Authorities:

Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. 460k-1)

Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715d)

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. -664)

Emergency Wetland Resources Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. -3901(b) 100 Stat. 3583)

1985 Food Security Act

Refuge Purpose(s):

- "...for use 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 (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 (Refuge Recreation Act)
- "... the conservation of the wetlands of the Nation in order to maintain the public benefits they provide and to help fulfill international obligations contained in various migratory bird treaties and conventions ..." 16 U.S.C. -3901(b), 100 Stat. 3583 (Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986)
- "... for conservation purposes", (1985 Food Security Act in conjunction with the transfer of Farm Service Agency, formerly Farmers Home Administration, property)

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:

The use is trapping for wildlife management objectives on selected divisions of Port Louisa NWR in Iowa and Illinois. Recreational trapping is not allowed on the refuge.

Trapping will be used on the refuge as a management tool to address muskrat and beaver created problems within refuge infrastructure. Muskrats often burrow into roads, ditches, and dikes. Beavers can also be a problem in newly established tree plantings or create hazard trees in public use areas. The resulting holes and cave-ins along refuge roadways increase maintenance, create safety hazards to visitors and staff, and restrict the refuge's ability to regulate water levels. Plugging of water control structures and damage to delivery ditches often occurs by beaver and muskrat. Without the water regulatory ability, the refuge can not meet the primary goal of providing migratory bird habitat. The altered impoundments also create drainage restrictions and can potentially cause problems to neighboring private landowners. Impounding water on to adjacent 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 on a case-by-case basis 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) to an experienced trapper. The SUP will allow regulation of access and trapping times and methods to meet refuge objectives.

Availability of Resources:

Funds have been available to conduct this limited program on the refuge. The infrequent use of trapping should not impact refuge funds or personnel.

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, but the activity would not occur during migration when larger congregations of birds are present. The disturbance of a trapper at individual locations is temporary in nature and of short duration. Traps would likely be set in only a few problem areas at any one time and would not be widespread. 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. Repeated disturbance may cause changes in their patterns and affect their energy reserves for migration. Trapping may disturb other wildlife but would also be very short duration and in limited locations.

The capture of non-target 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 by removing animals that cause damage to

infrastructure. Trapping may also improve mast tree survival in areas of intensive forest management.

Trapping will generally not be visible to the public but could occur in areas of public use. Traps are typically set on sides of dikes, within water or culverts where the public would not be walking. Traps will not be set in areas and at times when hunters may be present with hunting dogs. Visitor and staff safety will be improved by the minimization of damage to refuge roadways. The refuge's relationship with neighboring landowners will improve as we respond to their needs of removing excess water created by beaver dams or blocking of culverts.

Furbearers are an important part of the Mississippi River ecosystem and are a refuge resource to be maintained. Trapping on the refuge for select management purposes will not affect furbearer populations. Recreational trapping is allowed on surrounding private and state lands according to state regulations and furbearer populations are monitored by the state. Trapping methods will be according to the best management practices as outlined by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.

Public Review and Comment:

Trapping for refuge management was previously determined compatible in 2004 and is now being revised under the mandatory re-evaluation time period.

A draft of this Compatibility Determination will be available for public review and comment for 14 days at the Refuge Office in April 2016. The document will also be available for public review on the Refuge's webpage, through local media outlets, and notices posted at libraries.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

The following stipulations are required to ensure compatibility:

1. Trapping will only be conducted for management reasons as determined by the refuge manager or his or her designated representative.
2. Trapping will only occur by refuge personnel or conducted by an outside individual through the use of a 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 Wednesday of each week.

Justification:

Trapping on selected areas of Port Louisa NWR in the states of Iowa and Illinois 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.

Refuge Manager: _____
Catherine J. Nigg Date

Concurrence: _____
Sabrina Chandler, Refuge Supervisor Date

Regional Chief: _____
Charles Blair, Refuge Chief Date

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Re-evaluation Date: 2026