The Service is expanding hunting opportunities for white-tailed deer already hunted on the refuge on an additional 12,763 acres of the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in accordance with the refuge’s Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Hunt Plan.

Within the spirit and intent of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other statutes, orders, and policies that protect fish and wildlife resources, I have established the following administrative record and determined that the following proposed action is categorically excluded from NEPA documentation requirements consistent with 40 CFR 1508.4, 43 CFR 46.205, and 516 DM 8.5.

The Service has fully satisfied the other requirements for expanding these opportunities on the refuge, including:

☑ determining that the opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Compatibility Determination completed in 2019);

☑ ensuring the opportunities are consistent with existing State, local, and refuge-specific regulations (50 CFR 32.32);
   *Use of signs and brochures may supplement the refuge-specific regulations

☑ complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (see attached);

☑ complying with the Endangered Species Act section 7 evaluation (completed in 2019 with opening package);
   OR □ N/A because there are no candidate, threatened or endangered species present;

☑ complying with the National Historic Preservation Act section 106 consultation (No consultation required);
   OR □ N/A because there are no cultural or historic resources present;

The Service is, therefore, waiving the requirement to prepare an opening package in compliance with Service policy (605 FW 2.9A).

Signature **JUSTIN SEXTON**
Date: 2019.12.17 15:30:54 -06'00'

Title **Refuge Manager**
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CHECKLIST FOR NEPA COMPLIANCE

Proposed Action:
Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge is proposing to open an additional 12,763 acres to the hunting of white-tailed deer with firearms and archery equipment in accordance with existing State, local, and refuge-specific regulations (50 CFR 32.32). The refuge is proposing that one area of 663 areas would start allowing white-tailed deer hunting with firearms. This area is currently open to archery white-tailed deer hunting and all other existing State hunting regulations. The other area of 12,100 acres is currently open to hunting of white-tailed deer with firearms and the refuge is proposing to start allowing the hunting of white-tailed deer with archery equipment. This will completely align the area with state of Illinois hunting regulations.

This proposed action is covered by the following categorical exclusion: 516 DM 8.5 B (7) and 516 DM 8.5 B (9)

An action by the Service that only results in “minor changes in the amounts or types of public use on Service or State managed lands, in accordance with existing regulations, management plans, and procedures” and only results in “minor changes in existing master plans, comprehensive conservation plans, or operations, when no or minor effects are anticipated”, is categorically excluded from further NEPA analyses, because it has been determined to be a class of action which does not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment (516 DM 8.5 B (7) and B (9)).

This action will only result in a minor change in the amount/type of hunting on the refuge, because these areas are already open the hunting of white-tailed deer with the use of archery and firearms this would result in an increase of 21 additional days of hunting in these area. It is estimated that this action would result in the harvesting of an additional 80 deer annually. Opening the refuge to additional hunting opportunities as proposed was contemplated in the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge Hunt Plan and the minor impacts to the human environment of opening these additional acres would be similar to those analyzed in the Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge EA for the refuges original hunt plan. Extraordinary Circumstance are not triggered. The 2019 Hunt plan has been amended to address changes as described.

Extraordinary Circumstances (43 CFR 46.215):
Could This Proposed Action (check (✓) yes or no for each item below):

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102(2)(E)]?

☐ ☒ d. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?

☐ ☒ e. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?

☐ ☒ f. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?

☐ ☒ g. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau?

☐ ☒ h. Have adverse effects on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?

☐ ☒ i. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?

☐ ☒ j. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898).

☐ ☒ k. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (EO 13007).

☐ ☒ l. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and EO 13112).

☐ ☒ m. Have material adverse effects on resources requiring compliance with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management), Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands), or the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act?

(If any of the above exceptions receive a “Yes” check (✓), an EA/EIS must be prepared.)
Within the spirit and intent of the Council of Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other statutes, orders, and policies that protect fish and wildlife resources, I have established the following administrative record and have determined:

☑ The proposed action is covered by a categorical exclusion as provided by 43 CFR §46.210 or 516 DM 8.5. No further NEPA documentation will therefore be made.

☐ An Extraordinary Circumstance (43 CFR 46.215) could exist for the proposed action and, so an EA/EIS must be prepared.

Service signature approval:

Signature JUSTIN SEXTON
Title Refuge Manager
Date: 2019.12.17 15:31:51 -06'00'

Signature
Title Refuge Supervisor
Date: 

Signature
Title Regional Refuge Chief