

## **COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION**

**Use:** Release of biocontrol agents

**Refuge Name:**

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) and Wetland Management District (District)

**Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies):**

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District was established by Public Law No. 94-466, 94<sup>th</sup> Congress on October 8, 1976. The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Act authorized acquisition of lands for Refuge purposes.

Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. § 742(a)(4)) and (16 U.S.C. § 742(b)(1))  
Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. § 3901(b), 100 Stat. 3583).

Waterfowl Production Areas - The Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act, March 16, 1934, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 718-718h, 48 Stat. 452) as amended August 1, 1958, (P.L. 85-585; 72 Stat. 486) for acquisition of “Waterfowl Production Areas”; the Wetlands Loan Act, October 4, 1961, as amended (16 U.S.C. 715k-3 - 715k-5, Stat. 813), funds appropriated under the Wetlands Loan Act are merged with duck stamp receipts in the fund and appropriated to the Secretary for the acquisition of migratory bird Refuges under provisions of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929, (16 U.S.C. Sec. 715, 715d - 715r, as amended.

FmHA fee title transfer properties - Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act 7 U.S.C. 2002.

**Refuge Purpose(s):**

The purposes of the Refuge “are to (1) provide habitat for a large number of migratory waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife species; (2) to provide environmental education, wildlife recreational opportunities, and interpretive programs for hundreds of thousands of Twin City residents; (3) to protect important natural resource areas from degradation; and to (4) protect the valley’s unique social, educational, and environmental assets.”

**Wetland Management District Purpose(s):**

The purposes of the District are to (1) “administer a complex of wetlands, grasslands, and limited amount of forests that provide good habitat for waterfowl, grasslands nesting birds, and associated species”; and (2) provide “wildlife-dependent recreation, wildlife interpretation, and environmental education to area citizens.” Additionally, the District “contributes to the restoration and protection of the Minnesota River watershed as well as the Cannon River in the Mississippi River drainage basin” through “the restoration of wildlife habitats on fee, easement, and private lands.”

**National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:**

Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), 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:**

Invasion of the Refuge and District habitats by non-native plants and animals can have significant, negative impacts on native flora and fauna. Biological controls (or biocontrol) are the practice of importing and releasing host specific natural enemies from a pest's native range to control invasive populations in the area of introduction. Biocontrol has been used for over 100 years in the U.S. and has successfully controlled invasive insect and weed pests such as gypsy moth, winter moth, ash whitefly, eucalyptus long-horned borer, purple loosestrife, leafy spurge and Klamath weed. The release and establishment of biocontrols on Refuge and District lands is an important tool in an integrated approach to pest management. In most cases, the Refuge and District will work in partnership with other State or Federal agencies and/or researchers to release and establish biocontrols on Refuge and District lands. Once established, these lands could be utilized as "nurseries" for biocontrols, with subsequent collection of biocontrols from Refuge and District lands for distribution to other areas where target invasives are in need of management.

**Availability of Resources:** The Refuge and District staff would work in direct partnership with State of Minnesota (State) agencies to release and establish biocontrols on Refuge and District lands. Staff resources are deemed adequate to manage this use at anticipated use levels.

Access points, boats, other vehicles, miscellaneous equipment, and limited logistical support are available. Collection of biocontrols from "nursery" sites on the Refuge and District would likely involve their staff and equipment.

**Anticipated Impacts of the Use:** Biocontrols would be released on Refuge and District lands to manage non-native, invasive species, thereby reducing the impacts of invasive plants and animals on native species. In all cases, proposed biocontrols will have a complete and thorough evaluation to ensure minimal to no impacts on native flora and fauna will result from direct negative interactions with proposed biocontrols. Typically, these evaluations are completed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture –Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) and Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MN-DOA). Environmental documentation of the potential effects of biocontrols will also be completed by USDA – APHIS. Refuge staff will only utilize biocontrols which have demonstrated efficacy in managing invasive plants and animals and undergone thorough reviews by USDA – APHIS. As part of the evaluation process, post-release monitoring, including impacts on target invasives, non-target natives and the spread and establishment of biocontrols, would be required to provide Refuge and District staff information on the impacts of biocontrol releases and ensure compliance with Service policy guidance.

Establishment and management of biocontrol nurseries on the Refuge and District would enable a broad approach to invasives management, by providing a readily available supply of biocontrols for distribution to both Refuge and District habitats and partners.

**Public Review and Comment:** Beginning April 11, 2016 this Compatibility Determination was posted for a 14-day period at the Bloomington and Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Centers. Public notification included locally distributed news releases identifying the availability of the draft CD.

**Determination:**

\_\_\_\_ Use is Not Compatible

xx Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

**Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:**

1. Only biocontrols which have a demonstrated efficacy in managing invasive plants and animals and have undergone thorough reviews by USDA - APHIS will be released.
2. All 3<sup>rd</sup> parties proposing to release biocontrols must possess all applicable state and federal permits for release of biocontrols.
3. Post-release monitoring by the State agency and/or Refuge and District staff, including impacts on target species, non-target natives and the spread and establishment of biocontrols, will be required to provide information on the impacts of biocontrol releases. Annual reports of release monitoring will be submitted as prescribed by the Refuge Manager.
4. Establishment of biocontrol nurseries and activities will be completed in close consultation with the Refuge Manager.

**Justification:** The use of biological agents to control invasive plants and animals is consistent with and supports integrated pest management (IPM) as required by Department of Interior policy 30 AM 12 (Pest Management Policy and Responsibilities) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy 7 RM 14 (Pest Control). The use of biocontrols is also consistent with Refuge policy 601 FW 3 (Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health). Partnering with other agencies to develop effective biological controls to reduce the introduction and spread of invasives was identified as part of Objective 2.2, 3.2, and 4.2 in the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Wetland Management District's Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

