

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CHECKLIST FOR NEPA COMPLIANCE

Proposed Action:

Dale Bumpers White River National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) proposes to make minor administrative changes to the station's hunt program reflected in 50 CFR 32.23 including;

- Authorize the harvest of mergansers in accordance with State, local, and refuge-specific regulations.
- Mergansers were authorized for harvest under the category of ducks within the 1994 White River NWR Sport Hunting Plan/EA, the 1979 Hunt Plan, and during the CCP/EA development process (2012).
- The harvest of mergansers will take place during already authorized hunting seasons and harvest will be incidental to other ducks harvested during the duck hunting season.
- Currently, duck hunting occurs throughout the Refuge and the opportunity to harvest mergansers will occur during the same time period and in the same designated areas.
- This opportunity to harvest mergansers will transpire during already authorized duck hunting season during pursuit of other species; therefore, the increase in overall disturbance and impact to habitats and other species is anticipated to be negligible.

This minor change is being proposed to bring the Refuge into closer alignment with the State of Arkansas duck hunting opportunities. The hunting program on Dale Bumpers White River NWR is described in the 1994 White River NWR Sport Hunting Plan and analyzed in the associated Environmental Assessment (USFWS 1994) and signed Finding of No Significant Impact (1995).

The Migratory Bird Hunting Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement of 2013 found, "that, on average, the total waterfowl harvest on the Nation's NWRs constitutes approximately 6% of the national waterfowl harvest (Table 6.1). Given this small proportion of the overall harvest, allowing this harvest opportunity on individual NWRs does not cumulatively constitute a significant effect on waterfowl populations."

This proposed action is covered by the following categorical exclusion 516 DM 8.5 A1 (1) Changes or amendments to an approved action when such changes have no or minor potential environmental impact. B (7) 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.

Extraordinary Circumstances (43 CFR 46.215) :

Could This Proposed Action (*check (✓) yes or no for each item below*):

Yes No

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | a. Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | X | b. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (EO 11990); floodplains (EO 11988); national monuments; |

migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?

- X c. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 102(2)(E)]?
- X d. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?
- X e. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?
- X f. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects?
- X g. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau?
- X 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?
- X i. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?
- X j. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (EO 12898).
- X 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).
- X 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).
- X 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:

X 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 could exist for the proposed action and, so an EA/EIS must be prepared.

Service signature approval:

Signature _____ Date: _____

Title _____

Signature _____ Date: _____

Title _____