Note to Reader

Cateogircal Exclusions and associated Categorical Exclusion Checklists are signed by Refuge Managers and do not require signature by the Regional Refuge Chief. Therefore, you will see a vacant signature line for the Regional Refuge Chief on the following Categorical Exclusion Checklist for this action. That is not an error, this action has been approved at the appropriate and required approving official.

U. S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION STATEMENT FOR
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

NOTE TO FILE

The Service is expanding hunting opportunities for duck, light and dark geese, teal, dove and coot aligning 10,236 acres of Grand Bay NWR with existing State (Mississippi and Alabama), local and refuge-specific regulations.

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 (see attached Compatibility Determination);

✓ ensuring the opportunities are consistent with existing State, local, and refuge-specific regulations (50 CFR 32.43 (Mississippi) and 50 CFR 32.20 (Alabama));

*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 (see attached Consultation documentation);
OR □ N/A because there are no candidate, threatened or endangered species present;

✓ complying with the National Historic Preservation Act section 106 consultation (see attached Consultation documentation);
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 _____ Date: 2/7/19

Title REFUGE MANAGER

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CHECKLIST FOR NEPA COMPLIANCE

Proposed Action: Grand Bay NWR is aligning 10,236 acres of migratory game bird hunting regulations in accordance with existing State (Mississippi and Alabama), local and refuge-specific regulations (50 CFR 32.43 (Mississippi) and 50 CFR 32.20 (Alabama)).

This proposed action is covered by the following categorical exclusion: 516 DM 8.5 B (7)
(Review proposed activities. An appropriate categorical exclusion must be identified and cited above before completing the remainder of the Checklist. If a categorical exclusion cannot be identified, or the proposal cannot meet the qualifying criteria in the categorical exclusion, an EA/EIS must be prepared.)

An action by the Service that only results in an administrative change or "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" 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)).

This action will only result in a minor change in aligning 10,236 acres of migratory game bird hunting regulations in accordance with existing State (Mississippi and Alabama), local and refuge-specific regulations . Hunting is currently authorized and ongoing on approximately 10,000 acres of the Refuge. This activity has been permitted on Refuge land since 2001 via an approved hunt plan and is also outlined in the Refuge's Comprehensive Management Plan completed in 2008. Opening the refuge to additional hunting opportunities as proposed was contemplated in the Grand Bay NWR Hunt Plan (February 2001) and the minor impacts to the human environment of opening these additional acres would be similar to those analyzed in the Environmental Assessment for the Grand Bay Hunt Plan (February 2001)

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

Yes	No		
□	✓	a.	Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety?
□	✓	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?
□	✓	c.	Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA section 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 _____ Date: 2/7/19

Title Refuge Manager, Grand Bay NWR

Signature _____ Date: _____

Title Regional Chief, NWRS, Southeast Region