

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 raccoon, opossum, and white-tailed deer on 33,744 acres of the Piedmont NWR in accordance with the refuge's 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 B(7). Hunting for raccoon and opossum will be expanded to four additional weekends in December on all areas currently open to raccoon and opossum hunting. An additional 2 day youth hunt for white-tailed deer will be added to coincide with the hunt for the disabled on those areas of the refuge currently open for hunting of white-tailed deer.

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 32.29);

*Use of signs and brochures may supplement the refuge-specific regulations

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

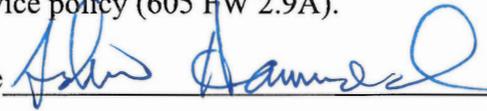
complying with the Endangered Species Act Section 7 evaluation (see attached Consultation documentation);

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: 2-14-19

Title: Refuge Manager Piedmont NWR

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION CHECKLIST FOR NEPA COMPLIANCE

Proposed Action: Piedmont NWR is proposing to expand hunting of raccoon, opossum, and white-tailed deer on 33,744 acres in accordance with existing State, local and refuge-specific regulations (50 CFR 32.29). Hunting for raccoon and opossum will be expanded to four additional weekends in December on all areas currently open to raccoon and opossum hunting. An additional 2 day youth hunt for white-tailed deer will be added to coincide with the hunt for the disabled on those areas of the refuge currently open for hunting of white-tailed deer.

This proposed action is covered by the following categorical exclusion: 516 DM 8.5 B (7)
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” 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 the type of hunting on the Refuge, because it is only adding additional days for hunting of raccoon, opossum, and white-tailed deer on the Refuge. Hunting is currently authorized and ongoing on approximately 33,744 acres of the Refuge. This activity has been permitted on Refuge land since the 1960s but raccoon and opossum hunting was stopped in the 1970s and 1980s. A hunt plan was written in 1985 and amended in 1989 to again include raccoon and opossum via an approved hunt plan and is also outlined in the Refuge's Comprehensive Management Plan completed in 2010. Opening the refuge to additional hunting opportunities as proposed was contemplated in the Piedmont Hunt Plan (March 1985, amended November 1989) and the minor impacts to the human environment of adding these additional days would be similar to those analyzed in the Environmental Assessment for upland game hunting (raccoon and opossum) and white-tailed deer hunting in August 1994, and the Piedmont NWR CCP and Compatibility Determination (2006).

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: 2-14-19

Title Refuge Manager, Piedmont NWR

Signature _____

Date: _____

Title Regional Chief, NWRs, Southeast Region

