

News Release

Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Block Island NWR □ John H. Chafee NWR at Pettaquamscutt Cove □ Ninigret NWR □ Sachuest Point NWR □ Trustum Pond NWR
50 Bend Road, Charlestown, RI 02813 401/364-9124 Fax: 401/364-0170



For Immediate Release

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U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service Seeks Public Comments Regarding White-Tailed Deer Management and Waterfowl Hunting at John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is seeking public comments regarding white-tailed deer management and waterfowl hunting at John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) located in Narragansett and South Kingstown, Washington County, Rhode Island. See attachment, Figure 1.

In 2002, a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) was established for the John H. Chafee NWR in order to create objectives and guide management decisions to ensure a consistent vision for the future of the refuge. One of the primary goals within this document is to “Maintain and/or restore natural ecological communities to promote healthy, functioning ecosystems” as well as determine compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. (USFWS 2002)

White-tailed deer are a native species on the mainland which are valued for their role in the environment. But very high densities of white-tailed deer raise questions about how they affect our natural communities and the health and safety of the public with regards to the relationship of ticks and the occurrence of Lyme disease, collisions with vehicles, and damage to landscaping and gardens.

Deer management may increase the recreational opportunities offered to the hunting public as part of an overall deer management strategy. Implementation of a waterfowl hunting program will increase the recreational opportunities offered to the hunting public. The CCP process identified priority public uses and hunting was identified as compatible with refuge purposes. Hunting helps the refuge achieve refuge purposes and management goals and objectives, as outlined in refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plans. In addition, hunting in these areas is an historic, traditional and sustainable activity. (USFWS 2002)

Some people are surprised to learn that hunting is allowed on a national wildlife refuge, but these lands have been established not only to preserve wild places, but also to promote wildlife-dependent recreation when compatible with the purposes for which the refuges were established.

Wildlife-dependent recreation includes environmental education, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, wildlife interpretation, hunting and fishing. All national wildlife refuges in the State are open to fishing, and goose and dove hunting is also allowed on a portion of the Trustum Pond National

Wildlife Refuge in South Kingstown. White-tailed deer hunting is allowed on portions of Ninigret and Block Island National Wildlife Refuges.

The Service will be completing an analysis consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act and public comments received will be incorporated as part of an Environmental Assessment (EA). The purpose of the EA is to evaluate how to best manage white-tailed deer and to evaluate implementing a waterfowl hunting program on John H. Chafee Refuge. The public is encouraged to submit any comments, issues, or concerns they may have regarding the project so they can be considered in the process.

Written public comments should be mailed or hand-delivered by September 15th, 2014 to:

Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex, ATTN: Deer Management and Waterfowl Hunting
50 Bend Road, Charlestown, RI 02813

For more information please contact the refuge headquarters at 401-364-9124, extension 44, or visit the website at <http://www.fws.gov/chafee/>

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

Attachment: Figure 1 (map) or see below.

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