Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Hunting and Fishing Plan

July 2020

Appendix A – Hunting Compatibility Determination
Appendix B – Fishing Compatibility Determination
Appendix C – Environmental Assessment
Appendix D – Intra-Service Section 7 Evaluation
Appendix E – Summary of Public Comments
Appendix F – Finding of No Significant Impact

Estimated Lead Agency Total Costs Associated with Developing and Producing the EA (per ERM 10-12): $14,956
Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Hunting and Fishing Plan

July 2020

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Block Island National Wildlife Refuge,
on Block Island, Town of New Shoreham

John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge,
in the Towns of South Kingstown and Narragansett

Ninigret National Wildlife Refuge,
in the Town of Charlestown

Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge,
in the Town of Middletown

Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge,
in the Town of South Kingstown

Submitted By:
Refuge Manager

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National Wildlife Refuge System

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Signature Date
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I. Introduction

National wildlife refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System), the purposes of an individual refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy, and certain laws and international treaties. The Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex (NWRC, Complex) is made up of five refuges (Figure 1). Each national wildlife refuge (NWR, refuge) is established under specific legislation. Similarly, each refuge has one or more specific legal purposes for which it was established. The establishing legislation and purposes for each refuge in the Complex are given below in Table 1. Additionally, the Service has specific priorities to provide wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which each refuge was established and the mission of the Refuge System. This document serves as a management plan for hunting and fishing activities on the Rhode Island NWRC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Refuge Purposes and Establishing Authorities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Refuge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John H. Chafee NWR</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The five refuges of the Complex are managed as part of the Refuge System, whose mission is “to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans” (Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997).

The act further mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the Refuge System to (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4):

- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the Refuge System;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the Refuge System, described at 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;
• Ensure effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining 
refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the states in which the units of the Refuge 
System are located;

• Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the 
mission of the Refuge System and the purposes of each refuge;

• Recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public 
uses of the Refuge System through which the American public can develop an 
appreciation for fish and wildlife;

• Ensure that opportunities are provided within the Refuge System for compatible wildlife-
dependent recreational uses; and

• Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

**Block Island NWR** is located approximately 12 miles off the mainland on Block Island, Town of New Shoreham (Figure 3). The refuge includes 133 acres in either fee title or conservation easement. Approximately 30 percent of Block Island is currently in conservation status, including lands owned or administered by the Service, The Nature Conservancy, Block Island Land Trust, Block Island Conservancy, Town of New Shoreham, Audubon Society of Rhode Island, and individual private landowners.

**John H. Chafee NWR** at Pettaquamscutt Cove is divided between the towns of South Kingstown and Narragansett, 30 miles south of Providence (see Figures 4 and 5). In 1988, Senator John H. Chafee proposed legislation designating 600 acres of Pettaquamscutt Cove and its associated uplands for the protection of black ducks, shorebirds, and other waterfowl. In 1999, Congress recognized Senator John H. Chafee’s significant contributions to natural resource protection by renaming Pettaquamscutt Cove Refuge the “John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge.” The refuge currently owns 550 acres within a 1,342-acre refuge acquisition boundary.

**Ninigret NWR** is located in Charlestown, 30 miles south of Providence (Figure 6). Transfers of land from the U.S. Navy to the Service primarily established and expanded the refuge, including: 27.5 acres of the Ninigret Pond barrier beach in 1970, 316.4 acres of the Naval Landing Field in 1979, and an additional 60 acres 1982. With acquisition of two large tracts of mature deciduous forest north of U.S. Route 1, the refuge now owns 868 acres. The refuge provides visitors with over 4 miles of hiking trails, as well as the Kettle Pond Visitor Center, referred to as the headquarters unit.

**Sachuest Point NWR** is located in the Town of Middletown, Newport County, about 23 miles southeast of Providence and 5 miles east of Newport (Figure 7). To the north and east, the Sakonnet River bounds the refuge; to the south, the Atlantic Ocean; and to the west, Sachuest Bay. Located immediately northwest are a Town of Middletown campground, the Norman Bird
Sanctuary, Gardiner Pond (supplying water to Newport), and Second and Third Beaches, owned and maintained by the Town of Middletown. The refuge currently owns 242 acres.

**Trustom Pond NWR** is located in South Kingstown, Washington County, about 15 miles south of Narragansett (Figure 8). The main body of the refuge is bordered by private land and the community of Green Hill to the west; by Matunuck Schoolhouse Road to the north; and by private land to the northeast and east. In 1974, Mrs. Ann Kenyon Morse donated the first 365 acres to the refuge. The refuge currently includes 777 acres in either fee title or conservation easement.

The refuges of the Complex total 2,570 acres, and receive up to 600,000 total refuge visits each year. Of the total annual visits, we estimate that fishing accounts for approximately 60,000 visits and hunting accounts for less than 370 visits. In developing each refuge’s Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), hunting surfaced as a key issue. At that time, those in support were primarily interested in deer hunting on all refuges, waterfowl hunting on John H. Chafee NWR and Ninigret NWR, and pheasant hunting on Block Island NWR. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) encouraged any new opportunities for hunting because rapid residential development in Rhode Island has confined public hunting opportunities to fewer and fewer areas. Four of the five refuges in the Complex fall within the RIDEM hunting zone 1, while Block Island NWR is located in hunting zone 4 (Figure 2).

The Service views managed or administrative hunts in areas where there are overabundant deer herds as an effective tool for population regulation. The overabundance of deer is a concern in Rhode Island, reflected in higher vehicle-deer collisions, increased complaints about deer browsing on commercial and residential landscape plantings, visible impacts on native vegetation, and greater public health concerns over the spread of Lyme disease.

The Complex’s Draft CCP and Environmental Assessment (December 2000) discussed and evaluated alternatives for varying levels of hunting opportunities, from no hunting at all, to opening refuges during State-regulated seasons for deer, waterfowl, and pheasant. The CCP acknowledged the need to identify how best to manage deer on the refuge given concerns regarding deleterious effects from high deer densities. The CCP also established (amongst others) “Goal 4: Provide opportunities for high quality, compatible, wildlife-dependent public use with particular emphasis on environmental education and interpretation.” Additionally, CCP objectives were developed to maintain, provide, or enhance hunting and fishing opportunities on the refuges. With the adoption of this hunt and fish plan, opening or expanding hunting and fishing opportunities will be added to existing public use opportunities on the Complex.

**II. Statement of Objectives**

The objectives of the hunting program for big game, small game, and migratory game birds, as well as the sport fishing program, on Rhode Island NWR Complex are to:

1. Provide the public with a high-quality recreational experience on complex lands and increase opportunities and access for hunters and anglers;
2. Design a hunting and fishing program that is administratively efficient and manageable with existing staffing levels and that aligns with RIDEM regulations when possible;

3. Implement a hunting and fishing program that is safe for all complex users;

4. Provide hunting and fishing opportunities for youth and those that need assistance; and

5. Design a hunting and fishing program that is in alignment with complex habitat management objectives.

To help meet these objectives, we will expand opportunities for white-tailed deer hunting to assist in maintaining deer densities between 12 to 15 deer per square mile. We will expand the hunting of waterfowl, especially youth hunting, in an effort to maintain a historic, wildlife-dependent public use and provide accessible hunting opportunities in cooperation with local accessibility experts and organizations. We will coordinate all hunting opportunities with the RIDEM. We will enhance public understanding of refuge hunting and fishing opportunities by providing quality maps, signage, outreach materials, and refuge websites.

The Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, and the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 authorize public hunting and fishing on refuges when compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established. As part of this document, compatibility determinations were prepared and, assuming management decisions are based on sound biological principles, and that user time and space restrictions are utilized to minimize wildlife disturbance, hunting and fishing are deemed compatible and worthwhile recreational opportunities to provide for the public.

III. Description of Hunting and Fishing Program

A. Areas to be Opened to Hunting/Fishing

**Block Island NWR**
All of the refuge’s 133 acres would be opened for white-tailed deer hunting (see Figure 3). These hunting units are identified as Beane Point, Grove Point, Sandy Point, Wash Pond, and Skippers Island. Approximately 9 acres of Wash Pond Unit would be opened for migratory waterfowl hunting (ducks, mergansers, and coot). Refuge lands are primarily upland, with some beach habitat and sandy areas. Saltwater fishing will continue to be allowed from refuge shorelines.

**John H. Chafee NWR**
Approximately 451 acres of the refuge’s 563 acres would be opened for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, fox, and coyote hunting, with some season and weapon restrictions (see Figures 4 and 5). Hunting units are identified as Foddering Farms, Stedman, Star Drive, Middlebridge, and Congdon Cove. Approximately 116 acres would be opened for migratory...
waterfowl hunting. Saltwater fishing would be conducted from the shoreline of the refuge, within 20 feet of the mean high tide line, extending 985 linear feet from the kayak ramp (see Figure 9).

The hunt area is comprised of upland forest, wetlands, and maritime shrublands. In order to achieve refuge objectives and to provide opportunities for all priority public uses, some areas of John H. Chafee NWR will remain closed to hunting and fishing. These strategic closures will reduce conflicts with other recreational, biological, or administrative uses. Hunting and fishing areas will be assessed annually for deteriorated habitat. Based on this annual assessment, these areas will be designated either open or temporarily closed.

Ninigret NWR
Nearly all of the refuge’s 883 acres would be opened for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, coyote and fox hunting, with some season and weapon restrictions (see Figure 6). These hunting units are identified as Kettle Pond, Lewis Tract, Salt Pond, and Barrier Beach. A mosaic of diverse vegetation types cover the refuge, composed of approximately 91 percent upland and nine percent wetland.

Wetland types include salt marsh, man-made ponds, forested and scrub-shrub wetlands, and emergent wetlands with varying amounts of open water. Most natural freshwater wetlands on the refuge are glacial kettle holes. The refuge contains at least 13 permanent ponds. Some tidal ponds on its mainland portion have restricted tidal flow due to siltation, and have become increasingly fresh. Most of the salt marsh acreage exists on the Barrier Beach parcel.

The open water of Ninigret Pond is not technically part of the refuge; however, the refuge does include approximately 3 miles of its shoreline, and another mile of shoreline along Foster’s Cove. The presence of Ninigret Pond is a significant attraction to wildlife and refuge visitors and thus, has a direct influence on use and management of refuge land. The refuge provides visitors with over 4 miles of hiking trails, as well as the Kettle Pond Visitor Center, co-located with the Complex headquarters building on the Kettle Pond unit.

Sachuest Point NWR
Sachuest Point NWR has the highest visitation of the five refuges of the Complex, with approximately 325,000 visitors per year. Due to the potentially high conflict with other visitors (and a limited deer population), we will not open the refuge to the general public for hunting. The refuge may be conducive to a limited, targeted group (i.e., veterans, youth hunters, hunters with disabilities) archery-only hunt for deer, coyote, and fox, where the refuge would close to all other activities (see Figure 7). The total area for archery hunting is 150 acres. We do not anticipate hunting activities to occur on an annual basis. Additionally, waterfowl hunting is available by boat offshore - thus, there is no need or demand for opening refuge property. We do allow saltwater fishing from the refuge shoreline in accordance with State regulations and refuge-specific regulations.

Trustom Pond NWR
Shrublands and forest compose almost 40 percent of the 777-acre refuge, mostly on its
western portion. Shrublands are dominated by shadbush, northern arrowwood, and bayberry, whereas forests are dominated mainly by red maple and black oak. Trustom Pond is a 160-acre brackish coastal pond that serves as the centerpiece of the refuge, and has the distinction of being the only coastal pond in Rhode Island without houses on its shoreline, and its waters are fully managed by the Service. The pond varies between 1 to 6 feet in depth. Freshwater wetlands of various types account for about 70 acres of the refuge, and there are five freshwater ponds totaling about 8 acres.

We propose to open lands on the western portion of the refuge (358 acres) to archery hunting for white-tailed deer, wild turkey, coyote, and fox (see Figure 8). The 22-acre tract identified as Field 1 is currently open to Canada geese and mourning dove hunting in coordination with the State as part of the South Shore Management Area. We propose to open Field 1 Unit to duck, mergansers, and coot during the State season. The eastern portion of Trustom Pond has a deed restriction preventing hunting activities, therefore that area would remain closed.

Hunting activities on the Trustom Pond NWR outside of Field 1 would not occur until calendar year 2021.

B. Species to be Taken, Hunting/Fishing Periods, Hunting/Fishing Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refuge</th>
<th>Migratory Game Bird</th>
<th>Upland Game</th>
<th>Big Game</th>
<th>Sport Fishing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ducks; Mergansers; Coot</td>
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<td>Deer</td>
<td>Saltwater Fish</td>
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<td>Block Island</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ducks; Geese; Coot</td>
<td>Coyote; Fox</td>
<td>Deer; Turkey</td>
<td>Saltwater Fish</td>
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<td>John H. Chafee</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coyote; Fox</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deer; Turkey</td>
<td>Saltwater Fish</td>
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<td>Ninigret</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coyote; Fox</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deer; Turkey</td>
<td>Saltwater Fish</td>
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<td>Sachuest Point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trustom Pond</td>
<td>Ducks; Geese; Coot; Mergansers; Coot; Mourning Dove</td>
<td>Coyote; Fox</td>
<td>Deer; Turkey</td>
<td>Saltwater Fish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refuge</th>
<th>Hunting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block Island</td>
<td>Deer: Hunting dates for white-tailed deer are currently set in accordance with the Town, with no weekend hunting allowed. Dates below are approximate, please see the Rhode Island Hunting and Trapping Abstract for actual dates. Archery (includes crossbow) – October through February Muzzleloader – November through February Shotgun – November February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Wildlife</td>
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<tr>
<td>John H. Chafee</td>
<td>Deer:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Archery (includes crossbow)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ducks, Mergansers, Coot:</td>
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<td>Geese:</td>
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<td>Turkey:</td>
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<td>Gray and Red Fox</td>
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<td>Ninigret</td>
<td>Deer:</td>
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<td>Archery (includes crossbow)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Muzzleloader</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shotgun</td>
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<td>Turkey:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Spring gobbler (shotgun)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coyote</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gray and Red Fox</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sachuest Point</td>
<td>Supervised limited youth/veteran archery-only deer hunt, plus coyote and fox.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustom Pond</td>
<td>Deer:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Archery (includes crossbow)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mourning Dove (Field 1 only):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Geese (Field 1 only):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ducks, Mergansers, Coot (Field 1 only):</td>
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</tbody>
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Turkey:
*Fall archery (includes crossbow) – October*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coyote – same as deer (archery only).</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gray and Red Fox – same as deer (archery only).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Most refuge units would run concurrently with State white-tailed deer and wild turkey seasons for public lands, with the addition of refuge-specific regulations, and season and/or weapon restrictions. Specific details on which species will be hunted in the different refuge units can be found in the refuge hunting maps (Figures 3 to 9). Typically, archery season would run from mid-September to the end of January; muzzleloader season would run from the first week of November to the beginning of December; and shotgun season would run from the first week of December to the third week of December. Private land antlerless only seasons and early September muzzleloader seasons would not be open on refuge lands. Waterfowl hunting would follow State waterfowl season dates and Federal regulations. The Complex is reintroducing New England cottontail and, therefore, will not allow any rabbit hunting on any refuge lands for the foreseeable future.

The refuge will work cooperatively with RIDEM to advertise hunting opportunities through the yearly hunting abstract. This helps reduce confusion when hunters participate in hunting activities on Service lands. No night hunting allowed on refuge lands.

For saltwater fishing, we will maintain seasonal closures for shoreline saltwater fishing at Sachuest Point NWR and Trustom Pond NWR. Anglers may saltwater fish from shorelines from September 16 to March 31 (i.e., closed from April 1 to September 15 to protect nesting shorebirds). Nighttime fishing will continue at Sachuest Point NWR by refuge permit.

**Hunting Access**

The Service will make a reasonable effort to allow hunters access to all portions of the hunt areas, and provide safe, quality hunting opportunities that consider the welfare of the refuge wildlife resources. Hunters must clearly label any tree stand or blind left on the refuge overnight with their Rhode Island hunting license number. Hunters must remove their tree stand(s), and/or blind(s) from the refuge on the last day of the refuge deer hunting season. Some units may require hunters to park on public roadways and pull-off locations.

**Block Island NWR**

The Wash Pond, Grove Point, and Skippers Island Units would be archery only during deer season, as a safe firearm safety setback cannot be met. Waterfowl hunting would be allowed in Wash Pond. Other designated lands on the refuge would align with State regulations.

**John H. Chafee NWR**

The Mettatuxet and Mumford units would remain closed for deer hunting. Other designated areas on the refuge would allow hunting for waterfowl, deer, and wild turkey. Refuge deer hunters will also be allowed to take fox and coyote during the deer season with archery equipment only.
Ninigret NWR
The Kettle Pond unit would be archery only. Salt Pond unit would be closed to the general public for all activities during the special hunts for the muzzleloader and shotgun season. Lewis Tract and Barrier Beach units would align with State regulations for deer and wild turkey hunting. Fall wild turkey hunting would be allowed on designated hunting units. Permitted refuge deer hunters will also be allowed to take fox and coyote during the deer season.

Sachuest Point NWR
Supervised, limited deer, coyote, and fox archery-only hunting for targeted groups including: youth, veterans, hunters with disabilities, and women. The refuge would be closed to all other activities during these special hunting opportunities. The total area for archery hunting would be 150 acres.

Trustom Pond NWR
Field 1 would continue to allow hunting with firearms for geese and mourning dove in coordination with RIDEM as part of the South Shore Management Area. Ducks, mergansers, and coot would be added to the species allowed to be taken in Field 1. Other designated lands on the refuge would allow fall archery hunting for deer and wild turkey. Refuge deer hunters will also be allowed to take fox and coyote during the deer season.

Special Hunts
Some refuge units would be open to special hunts. The goal of the special hunt is to provide quality recreational hunting experience that may be limited or not available for underserved hunting populations within the structure of general public hunting. The populations targeted for these special hunts are youth hunters, hunters with disabilities, women hunters, veterans, and senior hunters. All special hunts require refuge-specific authorization and will be coordinated with RIDEM.

C. Hunter/Angler Permit Requirements

General hunting provisions including seasons, licenses, safety courses, species, and bag limits are established within the regulations of the Rhode Island Hunting and Trapping Abstract. However, refuge hunts can be more restrictive to assure compatibility with refuge purposes. Harvest objectives shall be determined through the collaborative efforts of the RIDEM and refuge officials using various survey data stated previously.

All hunters will be required to possess and carry a personally signed refuge hunting brochure for the current refuge season. In addition, a “Hunt Application/Permit” (Office of Management and Business (OMB) Control No. 1018-0140; FWS Form 3-2439) will be required for hunting on Trustom Pond NWR only. No more than $20 permit fee for each type of hunt (deer and wild turkey) would be established to defray the costs of operation. At each refuge, numbers of hunters may be limited by access options and may need to be capped.
to provide for a quality hunt. Knowing in advance of a hunting opportunity allows hunters to prepare, plan, and scout, which ultimately improves the quality of their hunting experiences.

For Trustom Pond NWR, permit applications would most likely be administered by a contracted company that will feature online, mail, and telephone services to collect hunter information, required fees, and issue permits. These services would provide hunters with the ability to apply, pay for, and receive hunting permits in advance of the hunting dates. All fees must be paid prior to the issuance of a permit. Refuge staff would work with the contractor to provide the highest level of customer support.

Hunters on the refuge will be required to provide the Complex staff with documentation that clearly indicates the number of days hunted and the sex and number of animals harvested or wounded. This information would be collected on FWS form 3-2359 (Big Game Harvest Report) and FWS Form 3-2361 (Migratory Bird Hunt Report). The information we receive allows us to determine the demand for hunting on the refuge and provides an opportunity for communication with hunters. The hunting program will be reviewed on an annual basis, and necessary changes will be incorporated accordingly.

Saltwater fishing provisions including seasons, licenses, species, minimum size, and possession limits are established within the regulations of the Rhode Island Recreational Saltwater Fishing Abstract. Fishing at refuges can be more restrictive to assure compatibility with refuge purposes. Fishing has been limited on some areas to protect habitat and wildlife. No refuge permit is required for daytime fishing on all of the Complex. A “Fishing/Shrimping/Crabbing Application/Permit” (Office of Management and Business (OMB) Control No. 1018-0140; FWS Form 3-2358) is required for nighttime fishing at Sachuest Point NWR.

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

Rhode Island NWR Complex hunt opportunities are designed to align as closely as possible with State regulations, thus increasing coordination and cooperation in management of game populations. RIDEM was consulted in development of this plan, and has willingly shared harvest, permit sales, and other data as necessary to support development of this document.

E. Law Enforcement

Enforcement of refuge violations normally associated with management of a national wildlife refuge is the responsibility of commissioned Federal Wildlife Officers (FWO). Other Federal officers, special agents, State game wardens, and the local police departments often assist the Rhode Island NWR Complex law enforcement program. The following methods are used to control and enforce hunting and fishing regulations:

- FWOs will randomly check hunters and people fishing for compliance with Federal and State Laws, as well as refuge-specific regulations pertinent to hunting and fishing, including compatibility stipulations;
• FWOs will coordinate with RIDEM Environmental Police Officers other law enforcement agencies; and

The Rhode Island NWR Complex staff have met with local law enforcement agencies in the counties that contain the refuge units to develop good working relationships and coordinate appropriate strategies.

F. Funding and Staffing Requirements

Current annual hunting and fishing administration costs for the Complex, including salary, equipment, law enforcement, brochures, collection of data and analysis of biological information, etc. totals approximately $4,000. Funding specifically for hunts or fishing has not been allocated, although funds are available through station appropriation and permit fees. If our required administrative involvement increases, the costs will have to be re-evaluated to ensure a hunt compatible with refuge objectives and purposes can be conducted. It is anticipated that funding would continue to be sufficient to continue the hunting program at the Rhode Island NWR Complex in the future.

Maintenance of existing parking lots and trails would cost approximately $700 annually. It will cost about $6,950 annually to administer the new hunting program on the Complex, and about $3,550 to administer the fishing program, for a total annual cost of $10,500 (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff (Maintenance Workers, Biologist, and Refuge Managers) Hunt Program</td>
<td>$4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff (Maintenance Workers, Biologist, and Refuge Managers) Fishing</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain roads, parking lots, trails*</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News releases, fact sheets, reports for Hunt Program</td>
<td>$500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain hunting/fishing signs</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcement (hunting and fishing)**</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Annual Cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10,500</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Refuge trails and roads are maintained for a variety of activities. Costs shown are a percentage of total costs for trail/road maintenance on the refuge and are reflective of the percentage of trail/road use for hunting and fishing. Volunteers account for some maintenance hours and help to reduce overall cost of the program.

**Detailed Federal Wildlife Officers since the Complex does not have a Law Enforcement Officer.

IV. Conduct of the Hunting/Fishing Program

To ensure compatibility with refuge purposes and the mission of the Refuge System, hunting and fishing is conducted in accordance with State and Federal regulations, and supplemented by refuge-specific regulations. However, the refuge manager may, upon annual review of the
The hunting and fishing program, impose further restrictions on hunting or fishing, recommend the refuge be closed to hunting or fishing, or further liberalize hunting and fishing regulations up to the limit of State regulations. The refuge will restrict activity if it becomes inconsistent with other priority refuge programs or endangers refuge resources or public safety.

A. Hunter/Angler Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures

All hunters will be required to possess and carry a personally signed refuge hunting brochure for the current refuge season. In addition, a “Hunt Application/Permit” (Office of Management and Business (OMB) Control No. 1018-0140; FWS Form 3-2439) will be required for hunting on Trustom Pond NWR only. No more than $20 permit fee for each type of hunt (deer and wild turkey) would be established to defray the costs of operation. The signed brochure/permit would also serve as written permission as required by State regulations.

For Trustom Pond NWR, the requirement for permits would be on a temporary basis for the first few hunting seasons in order to collect information regarding hunter participation and demand, level of harvest and other information beneficial to monitoring of the hunt. When the requirement for permits is lifted, hunters would only be required to carry a personally signed copy of the refuge hunting brochure. This same approach was implemented on the Block Island NWR, where permits were required for the first few hunting seasons to collect information on the hunt, and then were no longer required based on review of the permit information that suggested permits were no longer necessary (i.e. lower than anticipated demand, no major issues).

Permit applications would most likely be administered by a contracted company that will feature online, mail, and telephone services to collect hunter information, required fees, and issue permits. These services would provide hunters with the ability to apply, pay for, and receive hunting permits in advance of the hunting dates. All fees must be paid prior to the issuance of a permit. Refuge staff would work with the contractor to provide the highest level of customer support.

Hunters on the complex will be required to provide the staff with documentation that clearly indicates the number of days hunted and the sex and number of animals harvested or wounded. This information would be collected on FWS Form 3-2359 for deer harvest, and FWS Form 3-2361 for waterfowl. The hunting program will be reviewed on an annual basis and necessary changes will be incorporated accordingly.

It is anticipated that the staff may need to cap the number of permit sales at Trustom Pond NWR on an annual basis in order to protect complex resources and to provide a quality hunt. Over time, the refuge may lift the cap on permits as long as there are no detrimental impacts to natural resources and the quality of the hunt remains high. Parking availability will potentially limit the number of hunters at each hunting unit.

Saltwater fishing on designated refuges is in accordance with the Rhode Island Recreational
Saltwater Fishing Abstract. Fishing had been limited on some areas to protect habitat and wildlife. No refuge permit is required for daytime fishing at any of the refuges. A “Fishing/Shrimping/Crabbing Application/Permit” (Office of Management and Business (OMB) Control No. 1018-0140; FWS Form 3-2358) is required for nighttime fishing at Sachuest Point NWR because this activity occurs after refuge hours. Nighttime fishing permit fee is $20 annually.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

To ensure compatibility with refuge purposes and the mission of the Refuge System, hunting and sport fishing must be conducted in accordance with State and Federal regulations, as supplemented by refuge-specific regulations (50 CFR Chapter 1, Subchapter C), and information sheets/brochures. Refuge-specific stipulations are also detailed in the Hunting Compatibility Determination (Appendix A) and Fishing Compatibility Determination (Appendix B). Listed below are general procedures that pertain to hunting on Rhode Island NWR Complex. These may be modified as conditions change or if refuge expansion occurs:

- We require hunters to carry a signed refuge hunting brochure for the current hunting season.

- At Trustom Pond NWR, we require hunters to complete a “Hunt Application/Permit” (Office of Management and Business (OMB) Control No. 1018-0140; FWS Form 3-2439) to be selected to hunt.

- We only allow portable tree stands and blinds for deer hunting. You must clearly label any tree stand or blind left on the refuge overnight with your Rhode Island hunting license number. You must remove your tree stand(s), and/or blind(s) from the refuge on the last day of the deer hunting season.

- Temporary goose or duck blinds and decoys must be removed at the end of each day’s hunt, no permanent blinds allowed.

- We allow the use of dogs consistent with State regulations when hunting migratory game birds. Dogs must be under direct control at all times.

Hunter orientation of Rhode Island Complex refuges will be achieved by providing a hunting brochure and map of the refuge at the Complex headquarters and the refuge websites. The map has refuge trails, public use areas, closed areas, and local roads clearly defined. Hunters can also obtain the refuge-specific regulations each year at the Complex headquarters and the website. Hunters can address questions to refuge staff by calling, writing, emailing, or visiting the Complex headquarters in Charlestown. Signs alerting the visiting public to educate themselves of the timing of hunting seasons will be posted at the refuge office and at access points and kiosks. The refuge would designate a minimum of 1 week that would provide hunters an opportunity to scout the refuge units in order to become familiar with the unit, habitats, refuge boundaries and facilities.
C. Refuge-Specific Fishing Regulations

Block Island NWR, Ninigret NWR, John H. Chafee NWR:

- We allow saltwater fishing on designated areas from refuge shorelines.

Sachuest Point NWR:

- We allow saltwater fishing on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:
  (i) Anglers may only saltwater fish at Sachuest Beach shoreline from September 16 through March 31.
  (ii) Anglers may night-fish after legal sunset with a refuge permit (FWS Form 3-2358).

Trustom Pond NWR:

- We allow saltwater fishing on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following condition: Anglers may saltwater fish from September 16 through March 31.

D. Relevant State Regulations

Hunters and anglers are responsible for knowing and complying with all applicable Rhode Island regulations.

E. Other Refuge Rules and Regulations for Hunting/Fishing

- **Equipment.** The refuge will permit the use of legal sporting arms, including archery, muzzleloaders, and shotguns in accordance with State regulations. We encourage voluntary use of non-toxic ammunition for all hunting on the Rhode Island NWRs, and will collaborate with the State on development of education materials and strategies on the benefits of using non-toxic shot. The use of non-toxic shot will be required for waterfowl and dove hunting as per Federal regulations.

- **License and Permits.** Hunters will be required to sign and carry an official refuge regulation brochure. Trustom Pond NWR hunters will be required to obtain an official permit along with a refuge regulation brochure.

- **Reporting Harvest.** Hunters will be required to fill out harvest information.

  **Hunter Safety Training.** Eligible hunters may be required to attend a mandatory refuge orientation briefing at the refuge visitor center for any refuge-sponsored hunt.

- **Retrieving Dogs.** Dogs are not allowed on refuge lands except on leash at designated
trails on Ninigret NWR, Kettle Pond Unit. Trained retrieving dogs are allowed on refuge lands with permitted hunters as stated above in the refuge-specific regulations. Using refuge lands to train dogs is prohibited.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting/ Fishing Program

In March 2020, the Service published the draft Hunting and Fishing Plan, Compatibility Determinations (CDs), and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the five refuges within the Complex. On March 16, 2020 we uploaded the hunt plan and associated documents onto the refuge websites, and on March 17, the first of four press releases was distributed to news organizations and partners through email notifications. In subsequent days, a press release was shared on Facebook with a link to the plan. Two public open houses were scheduled for April but were cancelled due to the group size limitations in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial 40-day comment period was extended three different times, eventually ending on June 8, 2020. Over the course of the comment period, frequently asked questions were posted to the websites, along with a brief summary of the plan for each Rhode Island refuge. A video about the proposed plan was posted to the refuge websites and linked from Facebook.

The Complex maintains a mailing list, for news release purposes, to local newspapers, radio stations, hunt clubs and partners’ websites. Special announcements and articles may be released in conjunction with hunting seasons. In addition, information about hunting and fishing will be available at Rhode Island NWRC headquarters and Complex websites.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunting/Fishing Program

Based on comments received during the 2001 CCP process, some negative public reaction was expected. Although there is a long tradition of hunting and fishing on former refuge lands, neighboring properties, and State lands, we anticipated that there would be some adverse public reaction to the hunting and fishing program from areas surrounding John H. Chafee NWR, Sachuest Point NWR, and Trustom Pond NWR, as these would be new hunting opportunities. During the 85-day comment period, a total of 1,641 individuals, organizations, and municipal governments offered comments. Appendix E summarizes the substantive comments and provides the Service’s responses.

C. How Hunters/Anglers Will be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations

General information regarding hunting, fishing, and other wildlife-dependent public uses can be obtained at Rhode Island NWR Complex headquarters, 50 Bend Road, Charlestown, Rhode Island 02813, or by calling 401-364-9124. Hunting brochures, dates, forms, hunting unit descriptions, maps, will be available on the station websites at:

- www.fws.gov/refuge/block_island/
VI. Compatibility Determination

Hunting, fishing, and all associated program activities proposed in this plan are expected to be found compatible with purposes of the refuge (See Appendices A and B).
Figure 1. Map of Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex
Figure 2. Rhode Island Deer Management Zones, RIDEM
Figure 3. Block Island NWR Hunting Units
Figure 4. John H. Chafee NWR Northern Hunting Units
Figure 5. John H. Chafee NWR Southern Hunting Units
Figure 6. Ninigret NWR Proposed Hunting Units

Ninigret NWR Hunt Units

- Deer/Turkey - Match State Regulations
- Deer/Fall Turkey - Archery Only
- Special Hunts, Deer/Fall Turkey - Archery Only
- Closed

Coyote/fox hunting allowed while deer hunting only
Figure 7. Sachuest Point NWR Proposed Hunting Units

Sachuest Point NWR Hunt Unit

- Special Archery Deer Hunt Only
  - No general public hunting allowed
- Closed

Coyote/Fox hunting allowed while deer hunting. Waterfowl, turkey and small game are closed.
Figure 8. Trustom Pond NWR Proposed Hunting Units
Figure 9. John H. Chafee NWR Proposed Fishing Area