

Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter National Wildlife Refuges

Wild Turkey Hunt Plan

August 2019

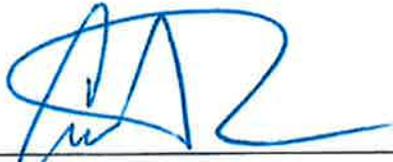
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex

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SACRAMENTO, DELEVAN, COLUSA, AND SUTTER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES WILD TURKEY HUNTING PLAN

1. Introduction

National Wildlife Refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), the purposes of an individual refuge, Service policy, and laws and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge was established pursuant to Executive Order 7562, February 27, 1937. Delevan National Wildlife Refuge was established pursuant to the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929. Colusa and Sutter National Wildlife Refuges were established pursuant to the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 and the Lea Act of 1948.

The primary purpose of Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge is to provide a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife (Executive Order 7562, February 27, 1937, provide an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds (16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)), to conserve fish, wildlife, and/or plants which are listed as endangered species or threatened species (16 U.S.C. 1534 (Endangered Species Act of 1973)), provide suitable incidental fish and wildlife oriented recreational development (16 U.S.C. 460k-2 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962)), and develop, advance, manage, conserve, and protect fish and wildlife resources (16 U.S.C. 742f(a)(4) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)).

The primary purpose of Delevan National Wildlife Refuge is to provide an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds (16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)) and to conserve fish, wildlife, and/or plants which are listed as endangered species or threatened species (16 U.S.C. 1534 (Endangered Species Act of 1973)).

The primary purpose of Colusa National Wildlife Refuge is to provide an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds (16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)), manage and control migratory waterfowl and other wildlife (16 U.S.C. 695 (Lea Act of 1948)), and to conserve fish, wildlife, and/or plants which are listed as endangered species or threatened species (16 U.S.C. 1534 (Endangered Species Act of 1973)).

The Primary purpose of Sutter National Wildlife Refuge is to provide an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds (16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929)), manage and control migratory waterfowl and other wildlife (16 U.S.C. 695 (Lea Act of 1948)), to conserve fish, wildlife, and/or plants which are listed as

endangered species or threatened species (16 U.S.C. 1534 (Endangered Species Act of 1973)), provide suitable incidental fish and wildlife oriented recreational development (16 U.S.C 460k-2 (Refuge Recreation Act of 1962)), and develop, advance, manage, conserve, and protect fish and wildlife resources (16 U.S. C 742f(a)(4) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956).

Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter NWRs were established for the conservation and enhancement of migratory birds, and other fish and wildlife management conservation and protection. The refuges consists of summer wetlands, seasonally flooded wetlands, unmanaged wetlands, alkali meadows, vernal pools, grasslands, and riparian forests. The wetlands of the refuges are critical to waterfowl of the Pacific Flyway. Currently, approximately 44 percent of the Pacific Flyway waterfowl population winters in the Sacramento Valley where these four refuges are located (2009 CCP). The four refuges play a significant role in achieving the objectives of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), Central Valley Joint Venture Implementation Plan, United States Shorebird Conservation Plan, and Waterbird Conservation Plan of North America.

The mission of the NWRS, as outlined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSA), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), is to:

“... to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.”

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

- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the NWRS;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the NWRS are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the NWRS 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 NWRS are located;
- Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of each refuge;
- Recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the NWRS through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- Ensure that opportunities are provided within the NWRS for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and
- Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

Therefore, it is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The four refuges are currently open to the hunting of ducks, geese, moorhens, coots, snipe and ring-necked pheasants. The hunting program for the four refuges is administered by the Service in Cooperation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The Service manages the refuge's land, habitat, and facilities; and the CDFW selects and processes the refuge hunters and operates the hunter check stations on the four refuges during waterfowl and pheasant season.

2. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of a wild turkey hunting program on Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter NWRs are to provide:

- The public with a recreational opportunity to experience wildlife on more refuge lands and increase opportunities for hunters, especially youth and novice hunters.
- Wildlife-dependent public recreation as mandated by and according to Service law and policy.
- Partner with CDFW, National Wild Turkey Federation, and other user groups in the Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation of hunters in California.

Hunting is consistent with the refuges' Comprehensive Conservation Plans larger visitor services and partnership goals. Visitor services goals identified the need to implement a high quality hunting program, which includes allowing turkey hunting opportunities. Partnership goals identified the need to maintain and enhance partnerships among Federal, State, local agencies, organizations, schools, corporations, and private landowners to promote the understanding and conservation of the refuges' resources, activities, and management. Partnership strategies include actively looking for partnering opportunities with local and regional conservation groups; wild turkey hunting allows us to work with partners to recruit, retain, and reactivate hunters by providing mentored turkey hunting opportunities.

3. Description of Hunting Program

A. Areas to be Opened to Hunting

Fall turkey hunting would occur in the free roam and pheasant only areas of Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter refuges. Wild turkey hunting would occur on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays during the fall wild turkey season determined by CDFW. Spring turkey hunting would occur on Saturday and Sundays at Sacramento and Delevan refuges during the spring wild turkey season determined by CDFW; hunting would occur on alternating weekends at Sacramento and Delevan refuges to rest the birds and ensure mentored hunters have a high

probability of successfully harvesting a wild turkey. Spring turkey hunting would occur in the existing hunting area of Sacramento refuge. At Delevan refuge, the spring turkey hunting would occur in the northern sanctuary wetland and upland units and in portions of the existing hunting area. See attached Maps (Figures 1-4):

- *Figure 1 - Sacramento NWR Fall Turkey Hunt in Free Roam areas; spring turkey hunt area*
- *Figure 2 - Delevan NWR Fall Turkey Hunt in Free Roam areas; spring turkey hunt area*
- *Figure 3 - Colusa NWR Fall Turkey Hunt in Free Roam areas*
- *Figure 4 - Sutter NWR Fall Turkey Hunt in Free Roam areas*

B. Species to be Taken, Hunting periods, Hunting Access

- **UPLAND GAME HUNTING:** Wild turkey hunting during the fall turkey season in the free roam and pheasant only units at Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter Refuges. The hunt will occur in all of the free roam and pheasant only units on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays during the CDFW fall turkey season. Hunting hours are during legal shooting hours, hunter numbers will be determined by daily free roam quotas, and will be administered by CDFW. Hunters will self-navigate to their locations. Wild turkey hunting during the spring turkey season will occur in the hunt units of the Sacramento refuge and in the northern units of the sanctuary and existing hunting units of the Delevan refuge. Hunting will take place on alternating weekends between Sacramento and Delevan during the regular CDFW spring turkey season. 4-5 mentored hunters will utilize Sacramento refuge and 2-3 mentored hunters will utilize Delevan refuge. Hunting hours are during legal shooting hours, a maximum of 4-5 hunters on Saturday and Sunday on the Sacramento refuge and a maximum of 2-3 hunters on alternating Saturday and Sundays on the Delevan refuge. Take limit will be set at one bearded wild turkey per hunter per weekend.
- **Hunter Permit Requirements (if applicable):** Hunters will be required to possess a valid California hunting license and upland bird validation.

Hunters during the fall season would apply for a reservation, enter the lottery, or enter the first come first serve list to access one of the hunting areas. All of these processes are run by CDFW. Hunters would be required to purchase either an Annual Pass, one day pass, or two day pass for CDFW Type A Areas. Hunters during the spring season would apply for reservations through the spring turkey hunt drawing application on the CDFW online reservation website. To apply for the hunts applicants would be required to be novice hunters. Type A area passes will not be required to participate in this hunting opportunity.

C. Consultation and Coordination with the State

The refuge reviewed the operations and regulations for neighboring State wildlife management areas and refuges to find consistency where possible. The refuge first reached out to the State on the January 28, 2019, to discuss this Hunt Plan. We worked with the local wildlife area managers early in the development of the plan. On February 14, 2019, we asked for review by the Gray Lodge Wildlife Management Area to help adjust our plan to align, where possible, with State management goals. We specifically asked the State if they could include the refuge in the State reservation program to ensure consistency and reduce operation costs.

D. Law Enforcement

Enforcement of refuge violations normally associated with management of a National Wildlife Refuge is the responsibility of commissioned Federal Wildlife Officers. Other officers, Special Agents, and State game wardens often assist the Sacramento NWRC full time federal wildlife officers.

The following methods are used to control and enforce hunting regulations:

- Refuge and hunt area boundaries will be clearly posted;
- The Refuge will provide a brochure that shows the hunt areas;
- Sacramento NWRC law enforcement staff will randomly check hunters for compliance

E. Funding and Staffing Requirements

Annual hunt administration costs, for Sacramento NWRC including salary, equipment, law enforcement, brochures, collection of hunt data and analysis of biological information, etc. totals approximately \$100,000. Sacramento NWRC funds are used to conduct hunts on Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, Sutter, and Sacramento River Refuges. Funding specifically for hunts has not been allocated, although funds are available through the Complex's annual budget. Incurred salary and other related operational costs for the administration of the reservation, lottery and check stations are incurred by CDFW. It is anticipated that funding would continue to be sufficient to continue the hunting program at Sacramento NWRC in the future.

4. Conduct of the Hunting Program

A. Hunter Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures (if applicable)

During the Fall Turkey Season, hunters may gain entry to hunt for wild turkeys through a prioritized, three-tier system process. The daily hunter quotas are filled through the check station in the following sequence: first the reservation card holders are processed, then the lottery card holders, and then first-come, first-served hunters. Refilling the hunting area quotas is accomplished using a waiting list. These systems establish the order of entry and hunters are required to purchase either an annual, one day, or two day pass for CDFW Type A areas.

Resident, junior, and non-resident hunters may apply for the fall turkey season.

Reservation applicants may purchase a one day (\$1.34) or season long application. Hunters may apply as many times per season as desired, but no more than once of each area for each hunt day. Application forms are available through the CDFW offices, licensed agents, and the online reservation application website. The Reservation application needs to be received 17 days prior to the requested hunt date. On Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter Refuges, each reservation assures entry for up to four individuals, whether adult hunters, junior hunters, or non-hunters.

The CDFW will hold an on-site lottery drawing for non-reservation hunters at each refuge during the fall turkey season. Non-reservation hunters may enter a lottery drawing on every refuge on the night before each hunt date. This applies to all members of the hunting party. A maximum of three additional names may be placed on the back of the lottery card. This includes adult hunters, junior hunters (no more than two juniors per adult) and non-hunters. A lottery fee is not required at this time.

If reservation and lottery hunters do not fill the hunt area, CDFW will allow hunters arriving at the refuge check station after the lottery drawing to sign-up to enter on a first-come, first-served list. A fee is not required at this time for first-come, first-served.

During the Spring Turkey Season, hunters may gain entry to hunt for wild turkeys on Sacramento and Delevan refuges through CDFW's Reservation Application process. Applicants would apply through the spring turkey hunt drawing application (\$2.42) for the entire regular spring turkey season. Applicants must be novice hunters to apply. Application forms are available through the CDFW offices and licensed agents. The Reservation application needs to be received 17 days prior to the requested hunt date. Each reservation assures entry for one hunter.

Selected hunters will be notified by CDFW indicating their status as being drawn for the hunt. This reservation will serve as their permit to hunt. Drawn youth hunters must be accompanied by an adult at least 18 years of age or older upon check-in at the refuge.

The Sacramento NWR Complex will be partnering with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) to implement the spring turkey hunt program on Sacramento and Delevan refuges. NWTF will provide funding for one staff member to work from the first Monday in March until the last Friday in May. This staff member will be responsible for overseeing the daily hunting logistics during the spring season on Sacramento and Delevan refuges. NWTF will also recruit volunteer guides to mentor selected hunter participants.

Selected hunters will meet at the designated refuge (Sacramento or Delevan) check station the day of the hunt 2 hours before legal shoot time. At the check station, staff will check licenses and validations and team the selected hunter with their volunteer guide for the weekend. Once the hunter and guide have been paired up, they will be given their designated hunting location for the

day. Staff will then lead the hunters and guides to their designated parking areas and direct them to their hunting locations. All designated locations will have a blind location set in highly productive areas for the hunting party to hunt out of. Once the hunters have concluded hunting for the day, they will return to the check station to check out. If they were unsuccessful in harvesting a turkey, they may return the following day to continue hunting.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

Listed below are refuge-specific regulations that pertain to hunting on Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter Refuges as of the date of this plan. These regulations may be modified as conditions change or if refuge expansion continues/occurs.

A. Migratory Game Bird Hunting. We allow hunting of goose, duck, coot, moorhen, and snipe on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations and subject to the following conditions:

1. You must obtain a State of California Department of Fish and Wildlife entry permit from the check station prior to entering the hunt area.
2. You must return the State-issued entry permit and vacate the refuge no later than 1½ hours after legal sunset unless participating in an overnight stay in accordance with A14.
3. Junior hunters age 15 or younger must be accompanied by, and remain within sight and normal voice contact of, an adult (age 18 or older) at all times while hunting.
4. Hunters may use shotguns only. No shotguns larger than 12 gauge.
5. Hunters may possess no more than 25 shotgun shells while in the field.
6. We restrict hunters assigned to the spaced blind area to within 100 feet (30.5 meters) of their assigned hunt site except for retrieving downed birds, placing decoys, or traveling to and from the area.
7. We allow portable gas stoves in designated parking/overnight stay areas.
8. We allow overnight stays in vehicles, motor homes, and trailers at the check station parking areas on Tuesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays (closed on Federal holidays) during waterfowl season.

B. Upland Game Hunting. We allow hunting of pheasant and turkey only in the free-roam areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations subject to the following conditions:

1. We allow pheasant hunting in the assigned pond/spaced blind area during a special 1-day-only pheasant hunt on the first Monday after the opening of the State pheasant hunting season.
2. Conditions A3 through A8 apply.

C. Big Game Hunting. [Reserved]

D. Sport Fishing. [Reserved]

C. Relevant State Regulations

- **Hunter Safety Training** – Eligible hunters must have passed a state certified hunter education program.

D. Other Refuge Rules and Regulations for Hunting

5. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting Program

The Complex has a standard list of local media contacts for news releases. The Service will utilize the Complex's website, kiosks, brochures, and flyers to provide current and accurate information regarding the Refuges' hunt program.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunting Program

Based on the comments received during the CCP (2009) hunting has already been allowed on Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter NWR's for more than 30 years and little negative public reaction is expected. We included a discussion of a hunt for wild turkeys during the spring season in our CCP (2009). Hunting is an important economic and recreational use of California's natural resources.

C. How Hunters Will Be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations

General information regarding hunting and other wildlife-dependent public uses can be obtained at Sacramento NWRC headquarters at 752 County Road 99W, Willows, CA 95988 or by calling (530) 934-2801. Dates, hunting unit directions, maps, and permit requirements about the hunt will be available on the station website at: www.fws.gov/refuge/sacramento/ and at the Refuge Visitor Center.

6. Compatibility Determination

Hunting and all associated program activities proposed in this plan are compatible with the purposes of the refuge. See attached Hunting Compatibility Determination for Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter National Wildlife Refuges.



Figure 1. Proposed Action - Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge

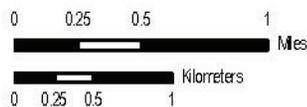
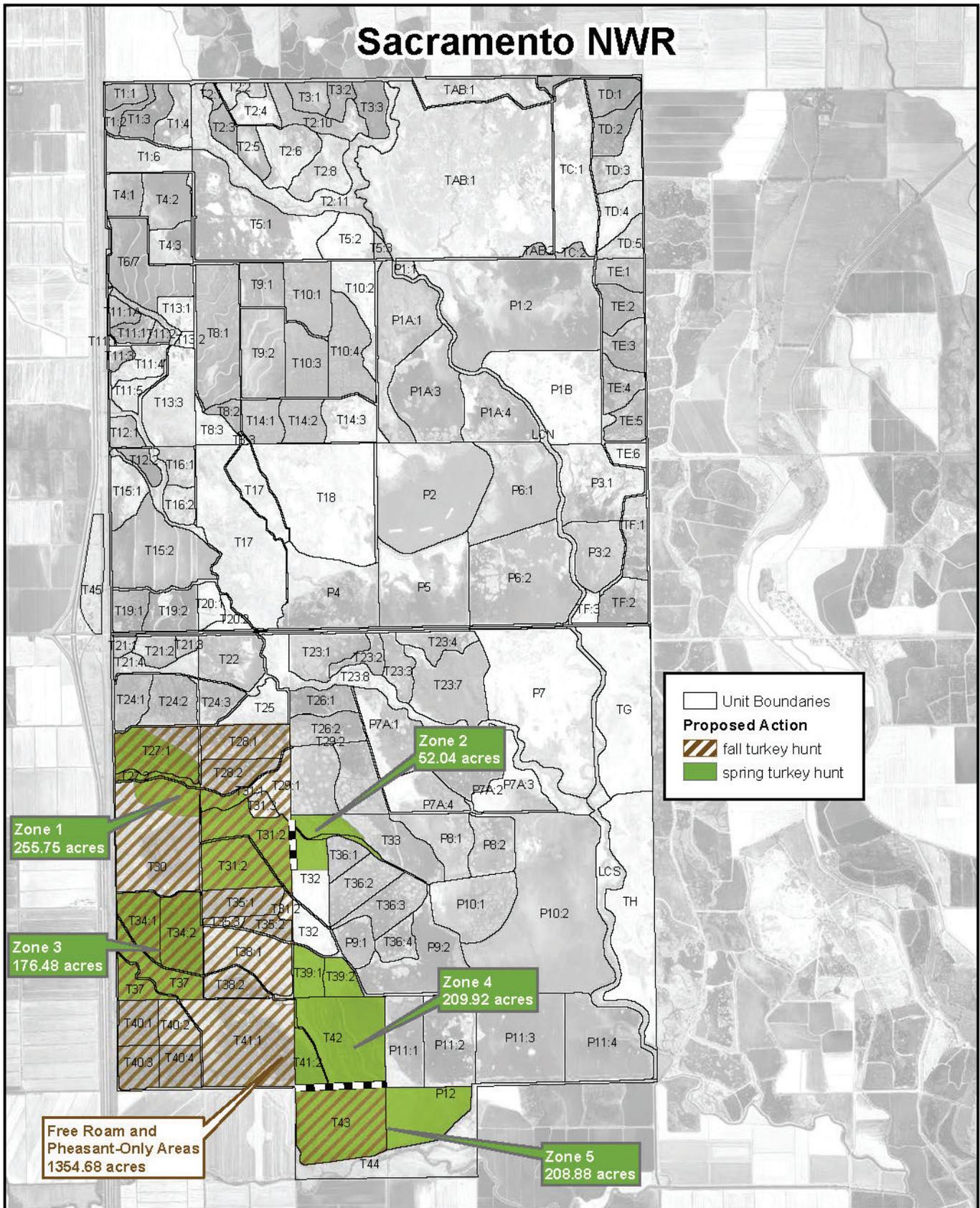




Figure 2. Proposed Action - Delevan National Wildlife Refuge

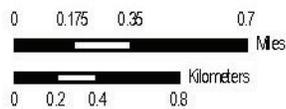
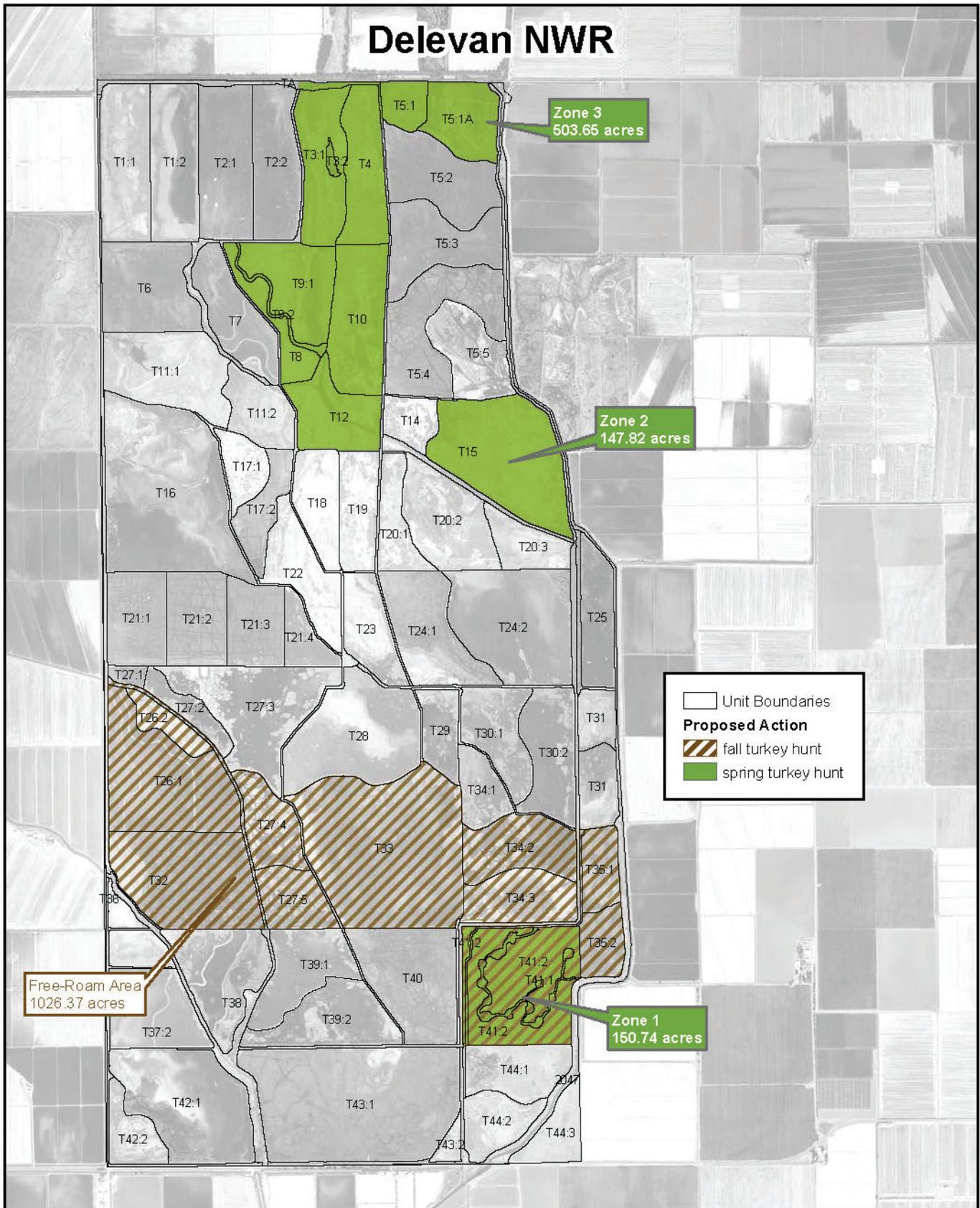




Figure 3. Proposed Action - Colusa National Wildlife Refuge

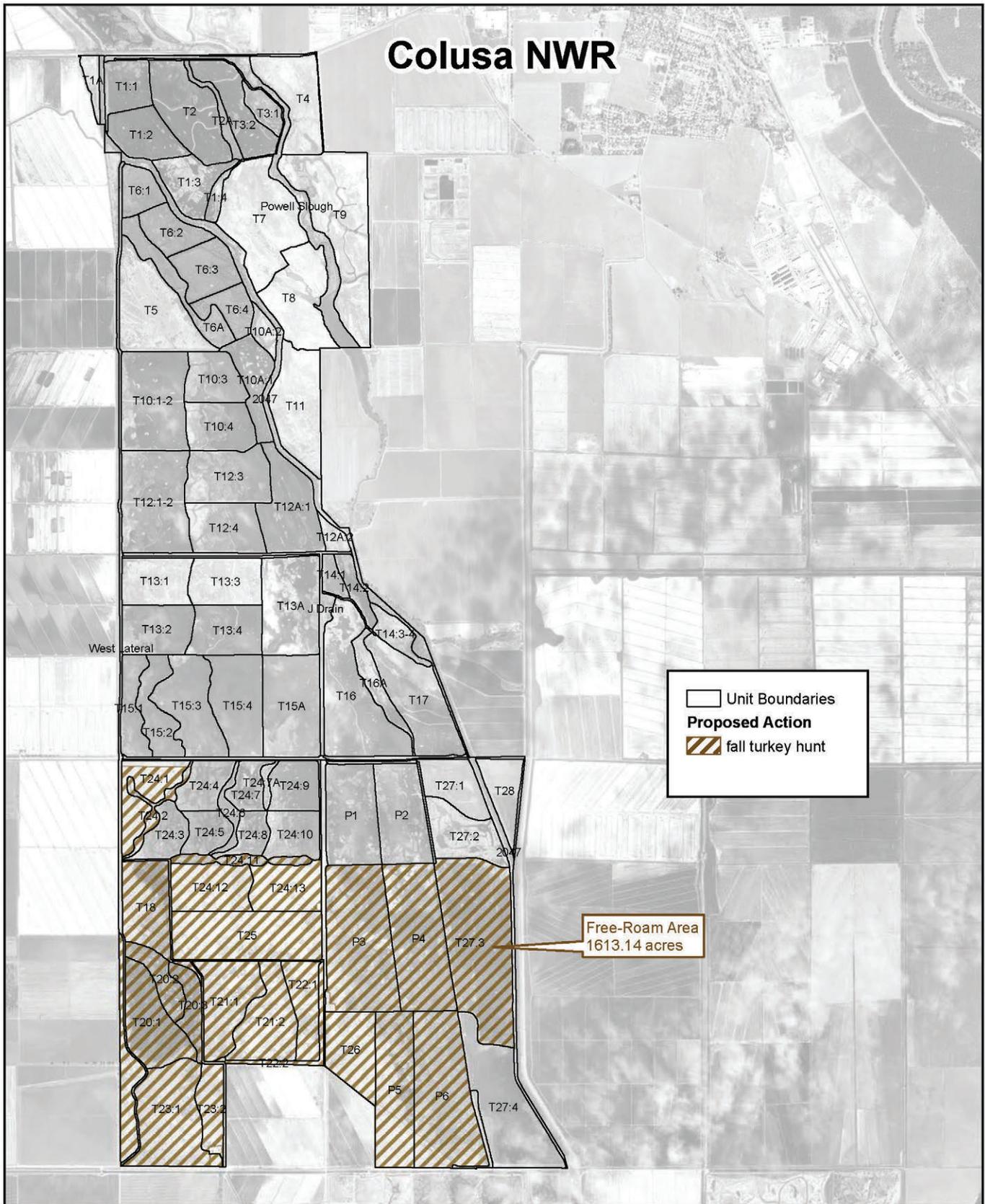




Figure 4. Proposed Action -Sutter National Wildlife Refuge

