

Response to Comments for the proposed addition of feral pig hunting on the Sacramento River NWR:

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This appendix contains a detailed summary of all comments that were received in response to the proposed addition of feral pig hunting on the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge. Public comments on the proposal to open feral pig hunting were accepted from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2014.

2.0 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

2.1 Summary of Comments Received on the addition of feral pig hunting and the Response Process

The Service received a total of 8 comment letters via email during the comment period on the Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge proposal to open feral pig hunting.

2.1.1 Public Outreach

To facilitate public review and comment on the proposed addition of feral pig hunting the Service posted information on the Refuge website, Refuge and Regional's Facebook page, conducted a presentation at the Tehama County Fish and Game Commission meeting, and sent out press releases to surrounding news agencies.

2.1.2 Affiliations

All comments received were general public affiliation types from recreationists who actively use the Refuge.

2.1.3 Comment Media

Comments were received in letter format via email. The Service considered all comments received as part of the decision-making process.

2.1.4 Place of Origin of Commenters

The greatest number of respondents (5) was from California, with 3 commenters who did not provide a place of origin.

2.2 Issues

It is important to note that comment letters may have contained more than one issue. Within a single comment letter, there may have been multiple comments on a specific issue; however, the issue was only recorded once per comment letter in this analysis. Either support or opposition was expressed for each of the issues.

Section 3 of this Appendix presents a summary of specific comments received, followed by the Service's responses.

After reviewing the 8 comment letters, 10 comments within 2 issues concerning the proposed changes were identified. The two issues were specific to the type of weapons allowed and the length of the season.

3.0 SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND SERVICE RESPONSES

This section provides a summary of the individual comments received on the proposed addition of feral pig hunting to the Hunt Plan for the Sacramento River NWR.

Within each topic area, similar or related comments were grouped by subtopic and presented as bulleted items. In many cases, the text in the bulleted comment is a quote from a particular letter; in some cases, very similar comments were merged into a single bullet or comments were paraphrased to make them more concise. Every effort was made to present all substantive comments in this summary; the specific comments presented here are a representative sample of all the comments received. A comment that addressed several issues was sometimes placed in a single bullet, in the section to which it was most closely related. Therefore, there is some overlap between topics. The Service response follows each group of comments. A copy of all of the original comments received on the proposed addition of feral pig hunting is maintained on file at Sacramento NWR Complex headquarters.

3.3 Hunting

3.3.2 Support for the addition of feral pig hunting on the Refuge

- Sacramento River NWR is considering allowing feral pig hunting on the river. This is a wise idea for several reasons. First, pigs are quickly establishing themselves in that habitat along the river and threatening to

undo the hard work that both federal government and private groups have done to re-establish that critical habitat. It doesn't take long for even a small group of pigs to root up that hard work. Second, I agree with and applaud the philosophy the Fish and Wildlife Service has taken to expand hunting opportunities on public land. Third, I don't think enforcement will be a problem. Wardens and biologists are frequently out along the river during existing turkey and deer hunting seasons.

- I am in full support of the proposal and all conditions. I have seen pigs on several occasions and witnessed the damage they are doing in the restoration areas.
- I believe your ideas to hunt feral pigs are appropriate and would like to see this hunting option.
- I wanted to send a quick letter of support with regard to adding feral pigs to the list of authorized species that are open to hunting on the Refuge. Not only will this help control populations of invasive species, but will also provide additional opportunity for hunters using these lands and further align regulations governing hunting on the Refuge with that of adjacent state and federal properties.
- I've seen firsthand the growth of the feral pig population in Tehama Co. on the Sacramento River. In the past five years the population of feral hogs has increased at a very rapid rate. There is a very serious problem at hand.
- I fully support pig hunting on public property and I believe this could help both the Refuge and adjacent landowners control and possibly remove these invasive pests.

Service Response:

- Comment Noted

3.3.3 Other Hunting Comments

Comment: I would like to see the Refuge consider the use of inline muzzleloaders for the taking of big game on its properties.

Service Response: As described in the Hunt Plan and Comprehensive Conservation Plan for SRNWR, hunt program details including method of take will be consistent with neighboring State properties which only allow shotgun firearms for hunting.

Comment: Pig hunting along the river should be allowed year round.

Service Response: After further consideration, the proposed feral pig hunting season has been extended to begin September 1 through March 15 to coincide with the first existing firearms season on the Refuge. The reasoning behind the proposed season dates is to minimize the disturbance to wildlife during nesting and breeding seasons, stay consistent with already established hunting seasons, and to reduce user conflicts between other priority wildlife dependent recreational users.