

VISITOR SERVICES PLAN FOR TENNESSEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Henry, Benton, Decatur, and Humphreys Counties, Tennessee



Southeast Region



Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge

Visitor Services Plan



U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Southeast Region

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CHAPTER I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

On December 28, 1945, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order No. 9670 establishing the Tennessee NWR. The following day, the Department of the Interior and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) entered into an agreement that the lands would henceforth be reserved for use as a wildlife refuge.

Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) runs along 65 miles of the Tennessee River (Figure 1). The refuge is comprised of three units: Duck River Unit (26,738 acres), Big Sandy Unit (21,348 acres), and Busseltown Unit (3,272 acres), for a total acreage of 51,358 acres.

The Duck River Unit is located at the junction of the Duck and Tennessee Rivers in Humphreys and Benton Counties. This unit has the best wetland management potential of all units. A wide variety of habitats is available for waterfowl and other waterbirds, including agriculture, moist-soil, mudflats, forested wetlands and scrub/shrub.

The Big Sandy Unit is the northernmost unit, located at the junction of the Big Sandy and Tennessee Rivers, about 12 miles north of the town of Big Sandy. Most of the lands on this unit are upland and forested with little wetland management capabilities. Waterfowl management activities primarily consist of providing sanctuary on the waters and mudflats of Kentucky Lake and agricultural crops for foraging habitats.

The Busseltown Unit is located along the western bank of the Tennessee River in Decatur County, roughly 5 miles northeast of Parsons, Tennessee. It is primarily managed for waterfowl by providing agricultural crops for foraging habitats. Some moist-soil and scrub/shrub habitats are also available.

The Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge provides a major wintering area for migrating waterfowl. Currently the refuge habitats include agricultural crops; vegetated wetlands, mudflats, shrub/scrub areas and forest lands. The resulting combination of agricultural grains, natural foods and protected areas sustains waterfowl through the winter months.

Because the refuge has such a diversity of habitats, an abundance of wildlife occurs on the refuge. There have been 306 species of birds recorded on the refuge which is significant as the state of Tennessee has a total 409 bird species, three quarters of which have been found on this refuge.

The refuge also provides homes for other resident wildlife species. Our checklist includes 51 mammals, 89 reptiles and amphibians and 144 species of fish located here. An abundance of white-tailed deer can be found throughout the area, along with smaller animals such as raccoons, foxes, squirrels, beaver, rabbits and wild turkey.

In addition to being a home to wildlife, the refuge offers many recreational opportunities such as: hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife viewing, and photography. The refuge offers two hiking trails, four wildlife observation decks, multiple boat ramps and fishing decks. The refuge also serves as the perfect outdoor classroom for environmental education and interpretation activities. Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge is open during daylight hours.

REFUGE PURPOSE

Tennessee NWR was established to provide feeding and resting habitat for migratory birds in the central portion of the Mississippi Flyway, with an emphasis placed on providing habitat for wintering waterfowl. Objectives are achieved through a water management program for waterfowl, wading bird rookeries, and neotropical migratory landbirds. Other methods are cultivation of about 3,150 acres of agricultural land and management of about 1,400 acres of moist-soil habitat.

The establishing and acquisition authorities for Tennessee NWR include the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715-715r) and Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (16 U.S.C. 661-667). These documents state that the refuge:

- "... [be] for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."
- "...shall be administered by him [Secretary of the Interior] directly or in accordance with cooperative agreements ... and in accordance with such rules and regulations for the conservation, maintenance, and management of wildlife, resources thereof, and its habitat thereon ..."

In addition, Public Land Order 4560 identified the purposes of the refuge to be "... to build, operate and maintain sub-impoundment structures; produce food crops or cover for wildlife; to regulate and restrict hunting, trapping and fishing and to otherwise manage said lands and impoundment areas for the protection and production of wildlife and fish populations ..." (Public Land Order, 1962).

VISITOR SERVICE PROGRAM PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF PLAN

The purpose of Tennessee NWR visitor services program is to foster understanding and instill appreciation of the fish, wildlife, and plants and their conservation by providing the public with safe, high quality, appropriate, and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational and educational programs and activities. In 1997, Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act (Improvement Act) which clearly states, that on national wildlife refuges, wildlife comes first. The Improvement Act also identified six priority wildlife-dependent public use activities and programs that are compatible with the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. These uses include hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation.

This Visitor Services Plan (VSP) was prepared based upon these guidelines. With the adoption and implementation of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) (USFWS 2010) and this step-down plan, all visitor service activities and programs on the Refuge would be in conformance with national guidelines and would insure that all visitor activities are compatible with the Refuges overarching wildlife mission and purposes.

The purpose of the VSP is to establish priorities and identify improvements, which will guide the Refuges visitor service program over the next fifteen years. A visitor services goal, objectives, and strategies have been identified within the Chapter IV of the CCP for Tennessee NWR (USFWS 2010). This VSP addresses compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses on the Refuge including hunting, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation (Appendix F of the CCP; USFWS 2010). The VSP also addresses the volunteer programs and the partnership and resource protection goals.



HISTORY OF REFUGE VISITOR SERVICE PROGRAM

Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, containing over 50,000 acres of water, woodlands, farmland and grasslands, is located on and around Kentucky Lake in northwest Tennessee. The refuge's three units, Big Sandy, Duck River, and Busseltown, stretch for about 65 miles along the Tennessee River. Established in 1945, the refuge is managed as an important resting and feeding area for wintering waterfowl. The American Bird Conservancy has designated the refuge as a Globally Important Bird Area of the U.S.

Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge has a public use program that serves an estimated 380,000 users annually. The most popular uses include fishing, other water-related recreation, wildlife observation, photography, hunting and environmental education.

The refuge opened a new 6,500 sq. ft Visitor Center in 2014, in the Britton Ford area of the Big Sandy Unit. The visitor center is in the same building as the new headquarters office. It consists of a lobby, exhibit hall, auditorium, environmental education classroom, and back patio.

The refuge helped to establish the Friends of Tennessee NWR in 2005. They currently have an active membership of over 400 members and focus mainly on refuge advocacy, environmental education, and running events. They have an office in the visitor center and run the Blue Heron Bookstore with refuge and Friends volunteers. Currently, the partnership between the refuge staff and the Friends group is working well with the Friends group accommodating refuge requests in most instances.

An active volunteer program is in place with an average of 5,000 hours being donated annually by 90 official refuge volunteers. Volunteer duties include assisting with visitor reception, manning the bookstore, assisting with environmental education and special events, building maintenance, Jr. Duck Stamp program, facility construction and maintenance, and wood duck banding account for the majority of the hours.

VISITOR SERVICE ISSUES, CONCERNS, AND FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Prior to development of the CCP, a visitor services review was conducted in February 2004 by Service public use and outreach specialists. The visitor services review team toured the refuge, identified and discussed the current status of public use programs, and provided a report with its recommendations for enhancing and improving these programs (USFWS 2004). Visitor Service issues were also identified during the CCP process (USFWS 2010). The significant issues identified were:

Access:

- Among the refuge's visitor facilities are 32 boat ramps. The refuge has attempted to close down some small boat ramps, but received strong opposition from the public. With so many ramps, it is difficult to maintain them all. During peak fishing use periods, visitors are limited by parking lot capacity at boat ramps. For four to five weeks these parking lots are overflowing, which causes problems. The refuge has 20+ boat ramps which are expensive to maintain.
- Boat ramps need designated parking areas to avoid blocking roads and gates.
- Is there a potential for partnerships in maintaining the boat ramps?

-
- Adequacy of the refuge's universally accessible hunting and fishing facilities for visitors with disabilities.
 - Equestrians want to use more of the refuge; right now they can only use refuge roads that are open to motorized vehicles.
 - The Britton Ford Boat Ramp has a problem with accessibility for visitors with disabilities
 - We need more universally accessible areas for electric wheel chairs or golf carts.
 - There should be some special privileges or accommodations made for people visiting family graves on the refuge, many of which are off the main roads. For most elderly, a half-mile hike is out of the question. Accessibility becomes a subjective issue based on individual capabilities. Accessibility to graveyards where gravel roads are available should be allowed by vehicle.

Hunting Issues:

- The resident Canada goose hunt has been problematic in recent years. Tennessee NWR is the only sanctuary locally and six WMAs within a 10-mile radius are open to waterfowl hunting. Clubs would probably oppose opening the refuge to hunting waterfowl.
- Could a youth waterfowl hunt be conducted with Ducks Unlimited's assistance?
- Closing areas to public use for the benefit of wildlife or wintering waterfowl is controversial.
- Set up areas strictly for universally accessible access for fishing, hunting, and wildlife viewing, for the benefit of visitors with disabilities. This issue needs to be addressed nationally.

Fishing Issues:

- Address the refuge's policy on fishing tournaments.

Environmental education and Interpretation Issues:

- There are opportunities to increase tourism related to the refuge and therefore increase the quality of life for local communities and residents.
- All public lands (state, county, and federal) represent a great opportunity to introduce families and the public to nature and increase the quality of life.
- Seventy-nine percent of refuge users are nonresidents; five states are represented in a campground next to the refuge.
- Refuge can pursue outreach to others and bring more people to the area, which may increase public use opportunities.

THEMES, MESSAGES, AND TOPICS

Environmental education is one of the primary objectives of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge is an excellent place to bring a class for hands-on environmental education activities and programs. Because of the diverse habitat types found at the refuge, there is ample feeding, nesting, and resting areas for 582 species of wildlife. It is a premier area for viewing wildlife, habitat diversity, and natural processes. Each field trip is tailor made to address the needs of your students or group. Access to the refuge and facilities are free.

Hunting is an important wildlife management tool that we recognize as a healthy, traditional outdoor pastime, deeply rooted in America's heritage. Hunting can instill a unique understanding and appreciate of wildlife, their behavior, and their habitat needs. State and area specific regulations apply.



With 144 species of fish, the Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge is considered a hotspot for fish species diversity and can boast a greater fish species diversity than any other inland national wildlife refuge in the country. In early spring, Kentucky Lake is known for some of the best crappie fishing in the nation. Later in the season, bass and catfish delight anglers throughout the lake.

Wildlife observation is the most popular activity for refuge visitors and with hiking trails, observation decks, and photography blinds, there is always something to see. Our interpretation programs provide opportunities for visitors to make their own connections to the natural world. In addition to staff and volunteers presenting programs, the refuge uses a variety of exhibits, signs, brochures, and electronic media to communicate natural history stories to visitors.

At Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge one of our most important roles is to teach about wildlife and natural resources. Perhaps the fastest growing activity on national wildlife refuges in the past ten years has been wildlife photography, biking, kayaking and canoeing.

VISITOR FACILITIES

There are 32 boat ramps, both improved and unimproved, which provide access for anglers as well as for canoes and kayaks. In addition to bank fishing from many parts of the refuge, there is one universally accessible fishing pier available for public use. Two marinas have concession contracts with the refuge. They provide access and services to refuge anglers and recreational boaters. There are approximately 43 miles of refuge roads that may be driven, walked, or bicycled either seasonally or year-round. The following facilities are also part of the refuges array of visitor services.

Big Sandy Unit:

- **Tennessee NWR Visitor Center**
This state-of-the-art 12,000 square foot visitor center is to connect people with the unique, natural resources that occur on TN NWR.
- **V.L. Childs Observation Deck**
Near the new visitor center, this deck provides year round views of wildlife in a bay of Kentucky Lake, complete with binoculars and interpretive signs.
- **Britton Ford Hiking Trail**
Located just one mile from the visitor center, this 2.5 mile moderate hiking trail is open seasonally from March 16th through November 14th.
- **A new .5 mile interpretive trail just adjacent to the Visitor Center was created in 2016. It is open seasonally from March 16th through November 14th.**
- **Mt. Zion Church**
Located on Big Sandy Peninsula. This old church built in 1898 still stands as a reminder of the community that once thrived here.
- **Bennett's Creek Observation Deck**
Just past Mt. Zion church on the Big Sandy Peninsula. Open year round with spotting scopes. A good location to view bald eagles in the winter.

- Chickasaw National Recreation Trail
On the Big Sandy Peninsula. This 1.2 mile easy hiking trail is open year round and features rock tread, benches and interpretive signs.

Duck River Unit:

- Pintail Point Observation Blind
Located in the Duck River Bottoms, this blind is open year round.
- Blue Goose Boulevard Interpretive Drive
In Duck River Bottoms off Refuge Lane. Open seasonally from March 16th through November 14th, this 3 mile drive allows visitors to view wildlife with interpretive signs.
- Duck River Bottoms Overlook
- A short ¼ mile trail leads to this woodland deck perched on a bluff that looks over the river towards the Duck River Bottoms.

VISITOR SERVICES MAPS

Figure 1. Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge

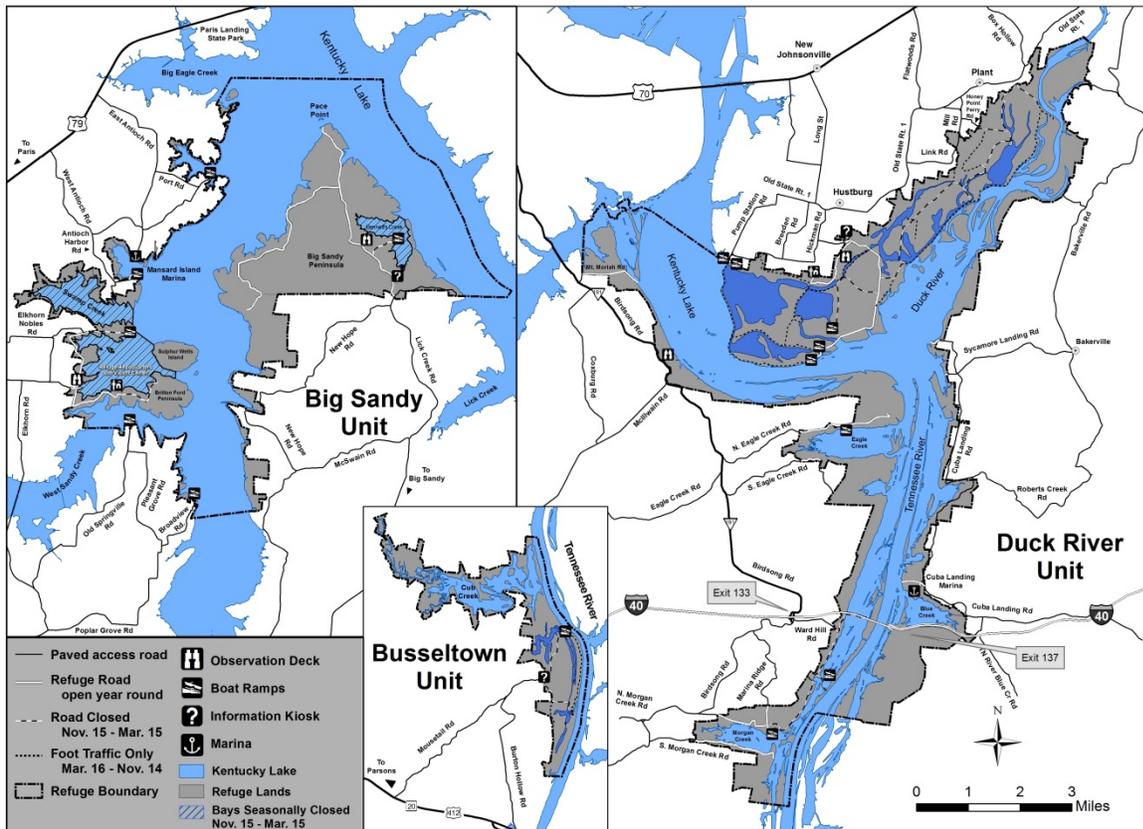




Figure 2. Current Visitor Services on the Big Sandy Unit of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge

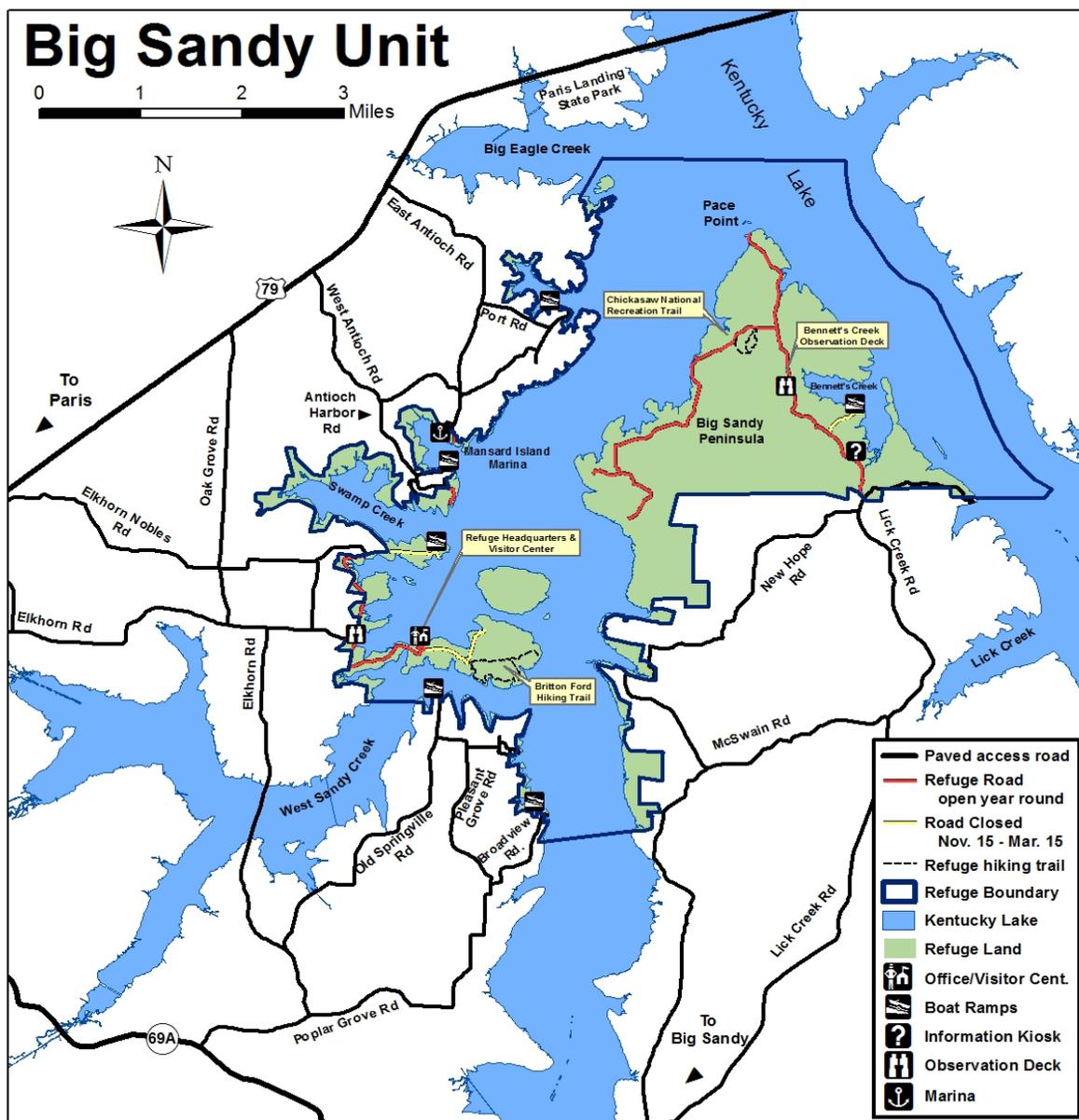


Figure 3. Current Visitor Services on the Duck River Unit of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge

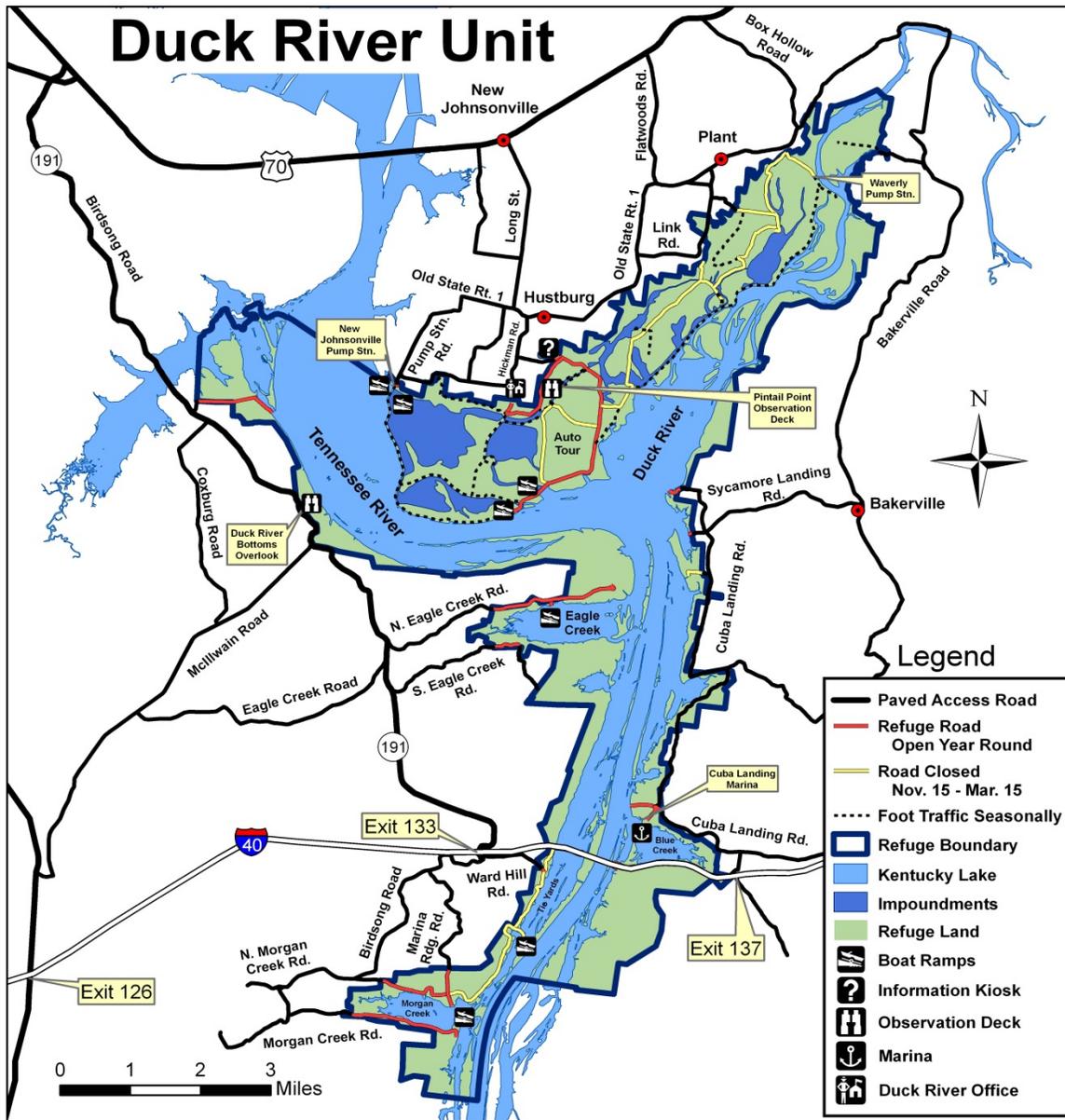
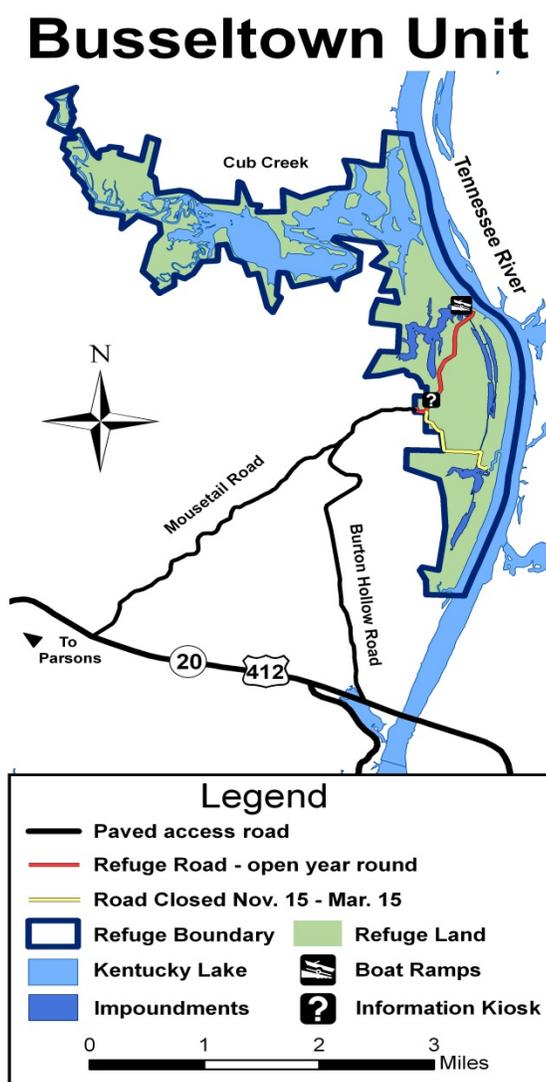




Figure 4. Current Visitor Services on the Busseltown Unit of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge



REFUGE VISITATION TRENDS AND IDENTIFYING AUDIENCES

The following reflects visitation to the Refuge during Fiscal Year 2015. Although the numbers fluctuate, the current methods of obtaining have improved with the construction and operation of the Visitor Center. The visitation is counted accurately at the new visitor center, but on the refuge, law enforcement officers are the primary estimators of whether visitation is up or down and we adjust the numbers accordingly. A large portion of the refuge is accessible by boat and counts for these visitors are just estimated. The multiple access points to the refuge and the large area it covers makes it difficult to accurately determine visitation.

General Visitation

The total number of visitors is 405,000 in FY 15. The number of Special Events hosted on- and off-site is 25. The Refuge added more Saturday events at the new visitor center with the assistance of the refuge friends group. The number of participants in special events on- and off- the refuge or administrative site is 3,547. With the visitor center open and the staff commitment required to keep it open staff will have less time for additional special events. The number of Visitors to the Visitor Center is 9,738.

Environmental Education, Environmental Interpretation, Wildlife Photography, Wildlife Observation, Hunting, and Fishing Visitation

The number of education participants involved in on- and off-site environmental education programs was 3,903. The large increase was due to the number of programs offered at the visitor center during its first year of operation. The number of interpretation participants in on- and off-site talks/programs was 1,400. This increase was due to the refuge participation in BASS Fest during FY15 and the National first day of sales event for the Duck Stamp in Memphis, TN. The number of Photography participants was 400.

The number of Foot Trail/Pedestrian visits was 2,500. The number of Auto Tour visits was 50,000. The number of Boat Trail/Launch visits was 45,000. The number of Bicycle visits was 200. The total Wildlife Observation visits was 97,700 in FY 15.

The number of Acres open to Hunting is 50,953. The number of waterfowl hunt visits is 175, upland game hunt visits is 250, and big game hunt visits is 1,157. The number of hunt permits purchased increased in FY 15 is 1,582. The total other recreational participants is about 35,000. The number of fishing visits to the Refuge equaled approximately 205,000.

Friends and Partners

The Friends of Tennessee provided many volunteers to help Refuge operation and maintenance. The total number of volunteers was 90. The number one priority for volunteers is staffing the visitor center. If additional volunteer resources are secured then their time was utilized for wildlife and habitat work. The loss of the ability to pay a living stipend to volunteers is hampering efforts to recruit volunteers for this work. The Volunteer hours for maintenance was 2,615. The Refuge had an excellent group of resident volunteers and summer interns this year whom assisted with numerous maintenance projects. The RV pad at the new HQ's facility was well utilized this year. The Volunteer hours spent on wildlife-dependent recreation was 4,165. Huge increases were realized in volunteer hours coming in to greet visitors at the new visitor center. For 2016, we anticipate local volunteers will continue to volunteer their time to assist with operating the visitor center and assisting with environmental education programs, interpretive programs, wildlife viewing, and other wildlife dependent recreation activities. Staff will continue to recruit new volunteers throughout the year.



Volunteer hours spent on cultural resources was 40. Due to the large volume of volunteers several of our volunteers were used to train new volunteer staff in the operation of the visitor center and other administrative related projects. With the visitor center, the refuge will require additional volunteers to be trained in visitor center operations and to assist with environmental education programs throughout the year. The total volunteer hours was 8,171.

VISITOR CAPACITY

Balancing the needs of visitors and the goal of protecting and managing resources can be challenging. In addition to resource protection, visitor capacity also impacts quality of experience for visitors. Visitor capacity is not always about limiting numbers of visitors. It is also about visitor experience and limiting impacts to resources.

CHAPTER II. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This section uses the format of the fourteen Visitor Services Standards in correlation with the relevant CCP goals and objectives. Visitor Services related objectives may be found within other CCP goals (i.e Fish and Wildlife Populations, Habitat Management, Resource Protection, and Refuge Administration). This process will identify existing CCP strategies and develop additional strategies that will form the basics of the Visitor Services Plan.

Table 1 lists all CCP goals and objectives that are relevant to Visitor Services.

TABLE 1: CCP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SUMMARY

<p>Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.</p>	<p>Objective 4-1: <u>Visitor services</u> – Within 5 years of the date of this CCP, draft, approve, and begin to implement a new Visitor Services Plan using the current format for such documents.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-2: <u>Hunting</u> – Increase hunting opportunities for deer. Continue to allow managed, limited hunting for turkey, squirrel, raccoon, and resident Canada geese.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-3: <u>Fishing</u> – Provide opportunities for fishing on the refuge by furnishing adequate boat launching facilities, bank fishing areas, and over the life of the CCP, provide additional Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant piers to accommodate anglers of all abilities.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-4: <u>Wildlife observation and wildlife photography</u> – Continue to offer opportunities for wildlife observation and photography throughout the refuge. Increase wildlife observation/ photography opportunities with blinds and a boardwalk. Continue to develop auto tour at Duck River Bottoms.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-5: <u>Environmental Education</u> – Continue to provide environmental education services to the public, including limited visits to schools, workshops, and onsite and offsite environmental education programs. Work with partners to expand environmental education facilities and opportunities on and near the refuge.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-6: <u>Interpretation</u> – Expand on existing interpretive program.</p>



	<p>Objective 4-7: <u>Visitor center and visitor contact station</u> – Within 5 years of the date of this CCP, work to construct a combined headquarters and visitor center, incorporating “green” technology, on the Big Sandy Unit, and within 15 years of the date of this CCP, build a visitor contact station at the Duck River Unit.</p>
<p>Goal 5: Provide personnel, partners, funding, and facilities needed to ensure that the goals and objectives identified in this CCP are achieved.</p>	<p>Objective 5-2: <u>Facilities, equipment and infrastructure</u> – Maintain existing facilities, equipment and infrastructure. Add headquarters/visitor center and Duck River visitor contact station and replace bunkhouse. In addition, replace Duck River office/maintenance facility and add equipment listed under strategies.</p>
	<p>Objective 5-3: <u>Volunteers and partnerships</u> – Strengthen the refuge’s volunteer programs, friends group, and partnerships by investing an increased portion of staff time into nurturing these promising relationships.</p>

STANDARD 1: DEVELOP A VISITOR SERVICES PLAN

Policy (605 FW 1.14 A)

Refuge managers have developed a VSP that addresses all compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses on the refuge.

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

This plan describes those visitor services programs that have been determined to be both appropriate and compatible with the mission of the NWRs and the purposes for which the Tennessee NWR was established.

VSP Strategies:

- Designate staff to develop and implement a Visitor Services Plan. This plan should be completed by the year 2016. The annual work plan should have specific tasks for all visitor services staff. Establish a signature page for concurrence with the management team
- Annually update VSP with accomplishments and changes (annually).
- Annually document accomplishments in an accomplishment report/RAPP (annually).

SIGNIFICANT PROGRAM CHANGES:

None

MONITOR AND EVALUATE:

1. Annually update VSP as new needs are recommended.
2. Annually update VSP as strategies are completed with completions dates.

STANDARD 2: WELCOME AND ORIENT VISITORS*CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION*

Signs

There are four redwood sandblasted 8' x 10' main entrance signs placed in 2001, one 8' x 10' directional sign for the refuge headquarters and visitor center. Sixteen sub-entrance signs were installed in 2003. There are four kiosks that were constructed from 2000 – 2003 at the four main entrances. These are three panel kiosks that have maps and specific unit information. They also have a brochure rack for refuge brochures. The signs and maps in most of the kiosks have not been updated since then. An information kiosk was placed at Britton Ford Trailhead in 2016 that includes an interpretive sign, bulletin board and brochure rack.

Directional Signs

Directional signs are in place along some access highways. There are some highways still that have no directional signs at key turns. There are several new signs that are at the refuge, but are not yet installed. With so many entrances to the refuge, adequate signage has been lacking. New directional signs were added from highway 79 and highway 69A leading to the headquarters/visitor center. Directional signs leading from I-40 and I-24 are needed to direct visitors to the headquarters/visitor center and other units.

Roads and Parking

All refuge roads are unpaved. Individual counties help to grade some of the refuge roads, but service staff provides most of the grader work. With only three on the maintenance staff, the roads are not graded as often as they should. For disturbance reasons, many roads and areas are closed during the waterfowl sanctuary on Nov. 15th – Mar. 15th. For disturbance reason, the refuge roads are not graded, even those remaining open year round. Some roads are also frequently closed due to flooding in the spring.

Two roads are scheduled to be paved with TDOT funds. In 2015, Wildlife Drive was paved from the main gate to Britton Ford area through to Britton Ford Hiking Trail (including the trail parking lot). In 2016 Haul Road in Duck River Bottoms was paved from the main gate through to the sub-headquarters.

There are gravel parking lots at all boat ramps, fishing piers, trailheads and observation decks and kiosks. Some lots have been enlarged and improved; however, some are too small, poorly designed



and need improvements. During peak fishing use periods, visitors are limited by parking lot capacity at our boat ramps. For four to five weeks these parking lots are overflowing which causes problems.

Regulatory

Refuge regulations are communicated to visitors through the use of publications, the general information kiosk at the four main entrance points to the refuge and Britton Ford Hiking Trail, on the refuge website and at the refuge Visitor Center. At most of the primary points of entry to the refuge and at the major boat launches, there is a small brown and white sign listing “do’s and don’ts for the area.

Publications

All brochures are produced per USFWS Graphic Standards. The general brochure is designed to welcome visitors and provide basic refuge information, regulations and a map of the public use area. The station also has a hunting brochure, a fishing brochure, a bird list, and a mammals/fish/reptiles/amphibians checklist. A refuge tear sheet is needed.

Visitor Center and Administrative Offices

In 2014, a Visitor Center and Administrative Offices were constructed on the Big Sandy Unit of Tennessee NWR. The administrative headquarters is approximately 5,848 square feet in size and provides staff offices, conference rooms, storage, and law enforcement storage space. The visitor center is approximately 5,603 square feet in size and provides a visitor contact area, exhibit hall, bookstore, and multi-purpose room for the public. The environmental education module is approximately 1,392 square feet with an environmental education classroom suitable for class sizes of 40 students. The combined footprint of the new building is approximately 12,479 square feet. The new building consolidates Complex-level administrative, resource management, and visitor contact services operations. Both the visitor center and the environmental education areas of the facility are devoted to educational activities, but also provide a central location for the staff of the Tennessee NWR Complex. This facility serves the headquarters staff, the staff at the Duck River Unit sub-headquarters, the staff at Cross Creeks NWR, and the law enforcement staff at Fort Campbell. This site is centrally located between those areas.

Service Logo

The Service logo is used in all of the signs, and is used in all publications.

Customer Service

Staff are uniformed and trained to be courteous to refuge visitors. Contact information is found in all refuge brochures. The refuge website is currently maintained by the refuge staff and provides contact information. A Tennessee NWR Facebook page was produced in 2014 and is updated often to provide visitors information on refuge activities and events. The Friends Group also maintains a website and Facebook page.

Visitor Feedback

Public feedback is provided by visitor’s interaction with staff.

Law Enforcement

There is one full time supervisory law enforcement officer for Tennessee and Cross Creeks NWR. There are 2 refuge officers stationed at Ft. Campbell. These officers spend 20% of their time doing law enforcement on Cross Creeks NWR. There is one LE officer stationed at Duck River Bottoms. Law enforcement problems include trespassing, drinking, drugs, and other wildlife violations.

The state, county and TVA law enforcement officers occasionally assist with law enforcement efforts on the refuge.

STANDARD 2 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

CCP Goal 5: Provide personnel, partners, funding, and facilities needed to ensure that the goals and objectives identified in this CCP are achieved.

VSP Objective Welcome and Orient – (CCP Objectives: 4-6, 4-7, 5-2) - Welcome and Orient – Utilize the Tennessee NWR Visitor Center as the focal point to welcome and orient visitors to the refuge. Increase the number areas where visitors get information about the refuge (social media, webpage, kiosks, interpretive signs, new Duck River Visitor Contact Station), maintain existing interpretive signs, update interpretive signs with current information, and provide clear directions to access the refuge units and public use facilities.

VSP Strategies

Now

- Work to develop an entrance area plan which identifies clear directional signs to the main refuges entrances.
- Britton Ford Trail
 - Add new kiosk
- Update General refuge brochure – decrease size and update maps and information
- Create a Tear Sheet about the refuge to utilize in the Visitor Center
- Continue to utilize Law Enforcement staff to welcome and orient visitors and maintain visitor safety
- Continuously instruct all staff members on courteous visitor contact and conveying information about refuge events

Intermediate

- Add new 3-panel kiosk to Visitor Center Parking Lot – this will provide information to refuge visitors during closed hours
- *Lashlee Springs Artesian Well* - Add interpretive signs and two car parking lot
- *Mount Zion Church*-Add interpretive sign close to church and Title/Entrance sign at road
- Chickasaw Trail - Replace Chickasaw trail head kiosk and remove tire bumper in front of trailhead
- Bennett's Creek Observation Deck - Add additional interpretive signs

Long term

- Work with TDOT to install signs at the exits on I-40 and I-24 directing visitors to the Duck River Unit and Visitor Center



STANDARD 3: HUNTING

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

The refuge has a 1989 Hunt Plan that was amended in 2003 for migratory birds. The refuge is open to non-quota hunting for white-tailed deer, turkey, squirrel, raccoon, and resident Canada geese. The refuge also holds quota gun deer hunts annually. The refuge staff coordinates the hunt program with state personnel and regulations.

A hunter participating in a scheduled hunt may also take beaver and coyote with any legal weapon. There are two firearm quota hunts for deer. Firearms include guns, archery, and muzzleloader. Currently, 750 hunters are permitted for quota hunts. A special non-quota youth hunt and a primitive weapons hunt are also held on the refuge. Primitive weapons include longbow, recurve bow, and side-hammered muzzleloader.

All quota and non-quota adult hunters are required to purchase an annual hunting permit for \$15.00. The permit allows hunters to participate in all quota and non-quota hunts at both Tennessee and Cross Creeks NWR. Youth hunters under the age of 16 are exempt from all fees. Refuge regulation brochures are readily available to hunters at the office, sub-office, four kiosks located throughout the refuge, community stores and refuge website.

The majority of Tennessee NWR is open to hunting, with the exception of a few safety zones around administrative facilities. Potential for user conflicts in terms of safety exists in the Britton Ford Hiking Trail and the Chickasaw National Recreation Trail area during periods when hunting and hiking occur at the same time.

There are currently no special provisions given to disabled hunters. However, state areas adjacent to the refuge do provide this type of opportunity.

STANDARD 3 GOAL, OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

VSP Objective Hunting – (CCP Objective: 4-2) – Increase hunting opportunities for deer. Continue to allow managed, limited hunting for turkey, squirrel, raccoon, and resident Canada geese.

VSP Strategies

Now

- Continue to work with an effective contract company to conduct on-line drawing for deer quota hunts
- Continue to charge an annual hunting permit – fee of \$15 to be collected by TWRA State Vendors
- Continue to hold annual hunt meeting with refuge staff in coordination with TWRA

Intermediate

- Continue to revise hunt program based on current needs (Earn-a-buck, quota hunts, youth hunts, handicap accessible hunting areas)

STANDARD 4: FISHING

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

Fishing is an extremely popular activity as the fish species diversity on this refuge is the highest of any inland refuge in the country. Anglers target several of the 144 species of fishes found on Tennessee NWR with largemouth bass, crappie, catfish and sauger being the prime targets. Bluegill, sunfish small mouth bass, and other hybrid bass are also caught in large numbers.

There are 23 boat ramps, both improved and unimproved which provide access for anglers to Kentucky Lake or interior refuge impoundments. Eleven of these ramps are closed during the sanctuary period from Nov. 15 to Mar. 15. In addition to bank fishing from many parts of the refuge there is also one handicapped fishing pier available for public use located at Henry County Port Boat Ramp on Big Sandy Unit. Mansard Island Marina is the only concession contract with the refuge. They provide access and services to refuge anglers and recreation boaters.

The Friends of Tennessee NWR host two fishing derbies each year on a pond located off refuge. One derby is open to the public for kids ages 12 and under. The other is for underprivileged kids and is sponsored by a private family. Each derby includes environmental education about fish, their habitats and beginning fishing tips.

STANDARD 4 GOAL, OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-3): Fishing – Provide opportunities for fishing on the refuge by maintaining adequate boat launching facilities, bank fishing areas, and over the life of the CCP, provide additional Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant piers to accommodate anglers of all abilities.

VSP Strategies

Now

- Develop a priorities list for improving & maintaining launches and concentrate efforts on top priorities.
- Increase outreach to the fisherman to increase awareness about Tennessee NWR.

Intermediate

- Replace Henry County Port Informational Sign
- Continue to consider ways to assess a fee for fishing to help maintain boat ramps etc.

Long Term

- Continue working with partners to improve boat launches.
- Assess areas where ADA-compliant piers could be constructed.
- Work with partners to establish a courtesy dock to access the Tennessee NWR Visitor Center.



STANDARD 5: WILDLIFE OBSERVATION AND WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

Wildlife Observation

Tennessee NWR provides some opportunity for wildlife observation. Visiting the four observation decks, hiking the three interpretive hiking trails, driving along refuge roads, or walking and biking on refuge roads are the most common means of observing refuge wildlife. Birding is one of the most popular forms of observation on the refuge. Viewing wintering ducks and geese, looking for spring and fall migrants and seeking songbirds or unusual visitors such as the white pelicans, sandhill cranes or viewing bald eagles is common practice for local and traveling “birders”. Tennessee NWR is well known to serious birders that are looking to view unusual migrants that cannot be found many other places in the state.

Visitors to the refuge are also treated to other common forms of wildlife such as hawks and owls, eagles, osprey, white-tailed deer, wild turkey, raccoon, squirrel, snakes, turtles, beavers and a variety of songbirds.

In 2007, the Blue Goose Blvd. was created by improving existing levees and creating vehicle pulloff areas. Interpretive signs using a cartoon blue goose as a guide were added in 2008. The Blue Goose Blvd is closed seasonally from Nov. 15 through Mar. 15 due to sanctuary.

One additional observation deck is planned for the Busseltown Unit. The decks are scheduled to begin construction concluding the creation of several impoundments in that unit to begin in 2016.

Annually a Bald Eagle/Waterfowl Tour is held in Duck River Bottoms attracting between 400-500 people to the refuge during the peak of waterfowl season in winter. For one afternoon only, the public is allowed to drive the Blue Goose Blvd. wildlife drive as a self-guided tour. Staff guided interpretive bus tours are offered two times during the afternoon to guide visitors back into closed sanctuary areas. This event has potential to grow into a festival, but it limited by facilities which include a rented heated tent and port-a-johns.

Wildlife Photography

Many visitors bring along their cameras for the specific purpose of photographing Tennessee’s wildlife. Waterfowl, butterflies, wading birds, birds of prey and other species are frequently photographed from refuge lands. Pintail Point in the Duck River Bottoms operates somewhat like a photography blind, especially during the winter months when the area under the blind is flooded bringing the waterfowl nearby. The refuge has found it challenging to find another location that would provide good lighting, get close to the waterfowl, without being in an area the frequently floods. Many visitors photograph nature and wildlife around the visitor center.

STANDARD 5 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-4): Wildlife observation and wildlife photography – Continue to offer opportunities for wildlife observation and photography throughout the refuge. Increase wildlife observation/ photography opportunities by adding a photography blind on the Duck River Unit which is accessed by permit only and a new observation deck on the Busseltown Unit.

VSP Strategies

Now

- Set up bird feeding station near the back patio of the Visitor Center
- Put up trail cameras and link it to FB page.
- Link refuge biologist trail camera footage on Tennessee NWR Facebook page.
- Put up Osprey pole with nesting platform near Visitor Center
- Continue to promote auto tour at Duck River Bottoms.
- Update Pictures in Pintail Point Blind.
- Manage vegetation to maintain viewing opportunities at Duck River Bottoms Overlook.

Intermediate

- Construct new observation deck at Busseltown Unit once new impoundments are created.
- Develop tear sheet that has a map with birding sites numbered and a description of what might be seen at each site.
- Work with Friends group to build a photography blind on Duck River Unit where it is close to wildlife but not in danger of being flooded. Make this blind accessible by permit only.
- Continue to work with friends group to promote refuge to photography clubs.
- Continue to increase Refuge photo library through working with the Friends group photography contest.

STANDARD 6: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

The environmental education program consists of field trips and special group programs led by the refuge ranger with assistance from volunteers and Friends members. The refuge visitor center is currently the main area where field trips are held, but occasionally groups are guided through areas such as Duck River Bottoms or Big Sandy Peninsula. In-class presentations, teacher training workshops and assistance with special classroom projects are other examples of the types of environmental education offered.

In the past year, approximately 3,000 kids have been through the visitor center on field trips. Many of these students return bringing their families to see the refuge. Adult groups also use the center for meetings, programs or special tours.

Local school systems also have environmental education resources available to them from the refuge office. These include curriculum guides and activity books, but the most used resource is 12 environmental education trunks called “Critter Crates”. These range from a variety of wildlife and habitat topics and are full of hands-on learning opportunities. They can be checked out free from schools, home schools, boy scouts, girl scouts, churches, or any other groups that work with children. The boxes are geared for K-8th grades, but can easily be adapted for older or younger ages.



An environmental education component has also been included in most refuge special events such as the Refuge Discovery Series. This series is sponsored by the Friends group and consists of monthly or biweekly events that are usually family friendly and educational such as building bluebird boxes, identifying insects and butterflies, guided hikes, hummingbird banding, kids fishing derbies, archery, astronomy, waterfowl and bald eagle viewing events and off-site events such as Earth Day and Agricultural Education days.

Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge provides environmental education programs free for all groups. Programs are designed to accommodate up to 75 students or 3 classes. Programs must be scheduled at least 2 weeks prior to your visit. All field trips to the refuge include hands on learning activities and an outdoor experience. Specific environmental education programs the refuge offers are:

Predator/Prey Relationship

- Students will gain an understanding of predator/prey relationships through interactive lessons and activities.

Threatened & Endangered Species

- Students will learn about the spirit of the Endangered/Threatened Species Act and the definition of the terms endangered, threatened, extinct, and extirpated. Students will learn some local E/TS species.

Adaptations

- Students will identify physical and behavioral adaptations that enhance the chances of survival through activities and lessons using mostly birds, but other animals, as well.

Habitats

- Students will identify components, environmental conditions, and interdependence among organisms found in different habitats by participating in physical activities and lessons.

Birds & Bird Watching

- Students will learn to identify birds, bird parts, and the importance of adaptations for birds to survive through lessons and observation in the wild. Binoculars will be used to identify birds in the field. Students will learn to identify some birds by sound.

Forest Ecology

- Students will identify several trees using various structural characteristics while taking a nature walk and engage in various activities. Students will also practice using a simple dichotomous key.

Migratory Birds

- Students discover the many challenges faced by migrating birds while participating in activities. They will learn the importance of adaptations and limiting factors during migration activities.

Aquatic Ecology

- Students learn about water quality monitoring and bio-indicators of healthy aquatic systems using Kentucky Lake.

STANDARD 6 GOAL, OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-5): Environmental Education – Utilize the Tennessee NWR Visitor Center to provide environmental education services to the public and areas school, which would include on and offsite field trips and programs, teacher training workshops, environmental education events, and participating in community events. Work with Friends of Tennessee NWR and partners to expand environmental education facilities and opportunities on and near the refuge.

VSP Strategies

Now

- Provide onsite environmental education programs to area schools focusing on adjacent counties such as Henry, Benton, Stewart, and Humphries Counties.
- Continue to conduct off-site programs while promoting Tennessee NWR Visitor Center opportunities.
- Utilize refuge as an outdoor classroom using Tennessee NWR Visitor Center as a focal point targeting families and/or small groups
 - Make refuge Discovery backpacks available by check-out at Visitor Center
- Increase field trip utilization of Tennessee NWR Visitor Center by providing bus transportation grant money raised through Friends of TN NWR
- Conduct or offer in-class testing review programs – adaptation, food chain, predator/prey relationships etc.
- Continue to update Refuge programs which are correlated to State of TN standards
- Promote how environmental programs are part of the education curriculum objectives and can be an extension of learning from the classroom.
- Utilizing the Visitor Center, promote teacher continuing education credit through offering environmental education Teacher Training Workshops
 - Hold these workshops during the summer.
 - Coordinate TTWs with other area partners to maximize effectiveness
- Collaborate, connect and conduct outreach to area school systems to promote VC as a quality field trip location
 - Establish a relationship with regional school administrators communicating opportunities for teacher training workshops, field trip opportunities, and EE events.
 - Offer VC for school administrator retreats and training
 - Consider offering teacher appreciation day – honoring teachers in late summer in order to see opportunities and promote facility.
 - Develop e-blast list which includes teachers, chambers, partners emails to promote EE programs
 - Utilize school administrators to send an e-blast out to all teachers promoting environmental education opportunities.
- Continue to promote Junior Duck Stamp Program (JDSP)
 - Develop Junior Duck Stamp workshop for teachers to learn about and implement program in their schools.
 - Conduct in-school presentation to promote JDSP.
 - Continue to utilize Tennessee NWR as main coordinator for statewide JDSP.
- Create promotional flyer for teachers specific to grades K-6, 7-8, and 9-12 explaining refuge field trip opportunities.



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- Continue to work with, coordinate, and promote area partners environmental education opportunities.
 - Develop Evaluation form for EE program collecting feedback from teachers/public.
 - Continue to revise, correlate, maintain, and promote critter crates to the public.
 - Train student interns and volunteers to conduct on and off-site programs.

STANDARD 7: INTERPRETATION

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

The 6,500 square foot visitor center which opened in 2014 contains an exhibit hall with state of the art interpretive exhibits, an auditorium which runs an interpretive refuge video and interpretive signs along the back patio.

Besides the visitor center exhibits, the interpretive signs out on the refuge are located in kiosks, on observation decks, at trailheads or along both trails, and along the wildlife drive. Most of the signs in the kiosks, at V.L. Childs Observation Deck and Pintail Point Observation Blind are pretty old and dated. The refuge holds several unique cultural history areas, such as Mt. Zion church that really need interpretation for the public to understand its significance.

The ranger, manager, biologist, planner, Law Enforcement officers and some Friends members conduct programs that help to interpret the management activities of the refuge.

STANDARD 7 GOAL, OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-6): Interpretation –Expand on existing interpretive program by developing programs that connect people in surrounding communities such as Henry, Decatur, Benton, Stewart, and Humphries Counties with nature.

VSP Strategies

- Connect people with nature using the Tennessee NWR and national wildlife refuge system.
 - Refuge events, giving interpretive programs, provide interpretive signage
- Utilize Visitor Center exhibits as teaching tools to learn about the refuge.
- Provide volunteer learning opportunities to understand refuge activities so they are more able to interpret to public.
- Staff Interpretive Training – give all staff an interpretive foundation
- Get more volunteers to participate in LBL Friends Group Interpretive Service Training
- Develop interpretive facilities in the following specific areas on Tennessee NWR:
 - Lashlee Springs Artesian Well – Add interpretive signs and two car parking lot
 - Continue holding “Back to the 23rd” interpretive event every few years
 - Mount Zion Church – add interpretive sign close to church and title/entrance sign at road
 - Add additional interpretive signs on Bennett’s Creek Observation Deck
 - Pintail Point – update pictures in blind,
 - Britton Ford Trail – add new kiosk – High priority
 - Add 3-panel kiosk in front of Visitor Center parking lot

STANDARD 8: MANAGE FOR OTHER RECREATIONAL USE OPPORTUNITIES

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

Numerous other public uses occur on Tennessee NWR. Some are wildlife-oriented while others are not. These activities include walking on gravel roads, biking and horseback riding on gravel roads, canoeing, kayaking, general boating, jet skiing, and picnicking. For this refuge, biking and horseback riding are allowed on refuge roads, but not in off-road areas such as trails. Many areas of the refuge are closed to all entry during the winter months due to waterfowl disturbance.

Other illegal activities do occur on the refuge. Riding four-wheelers vehicles into closed areas are examples of these activities. Hunting for artifacts along shoreline and on the river bottom and its tributaries have constantly been an issue for law enforcement officers.

STANDARD 8 GOAL, OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1): Other Visitor Services – Within the approval of this Visitor Services Plan, ensure all current and future wildlife-dependent uses are appropriate and compatible.

VSP Strategies

- Biking – May increase with paved roads
- Horseback riding – Provide signage that shows visitors where this use is approved.
- Canoeing, Kayaking, and Stand-up Paddle Boarding – Work with area partners to produce canoe and kayak trails on the refuge from March 15 to November 15, by creating launch areas, trails, brochure/map that outlines key areas (similar to Gaynor's Slough) – Consider adding more information for Swamp Creek, Britton Ford Bay, Bennett's Creek Bay, Clear Lake, Grassy Lake, Gaynor's Slough, pool 6, Tie yards, Burton's pond, and Cub Creek.
- Ensure maps have either directional insets or one big map that shows general directions to these areas on the refuge.
- Develop CD for general boating, canoeing, kayaking and stand-up Paddle Boarding,
- Geocaching – update current multi-geocache opportunities to divide in three smaller sections by each unit.
- Hiking Trail Development – Develop ½ mile trail adjacent to Visitor Center along peninsula and include an animal Olympics section (balance beam – squirrels, climbing wall, push-ups like lizard)
- If interest increases, add to Britton Ford Trail by increasing the ½ mile spur loop creating a figure 8 trail allowing for separate loops for folks to follow. Look to increase the trail 2 more miles.
- If more interest in Chickasaw Trail, connect up with Bennett's Observation Deck.
- Develop hiking trail at Duck River Bottoms if we can find an area that does not flood on a regular basis.
- Work with other area partners to participate in shoreline clean-up efforts.

STANDARD 9: OUTREACH



Effective outreach depends on open and continuing communication between the refuge staff and the public. This communication involves determining and understanding the issues, identifying audiences, crafting messages, selecting the most effective delivery techniques, and evaluating effectiveness. Achieved results will further the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and purpose(s) of the refuge. *See the National Outreach Strategy: A Master Plan for Communicating in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and America's National Wildlife Refuge System: 100 on 100 Outreach Campaign.*

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

The use of social media has gained popularity in recent years. It is our goal to offer more high quality information to this new age of technology savvy visitors. Using this new technology to promote our “Wildlife First” mission will increase awareness to many new user groups. The refuge and Friends group maintain an active Facebook page.

STANDARD 9 GOAL, OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4, 4-5, 4-6) Outreach – Provide outreach opportunities that promote an understanding and appreciation of fish, wildlife, habitat conservation, and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

VSP Strategies

Ecotourism

- As NPS develops “Every Kid in a Park” Program, determine ways the refuge can participate and monopolize on opportunities.
- As the Chamber develops this region as a destination, ensure that the Refuge is part of the marketing campaign.
- Continue relationship with Local Chambers to market the refuge as part of the Bus Tours for this area. Attend meetings, banquets, and events as possible to market the refuge opportunities.
- Work with the Regional Office to develop iPhone and Android Regional Passport App in coordination with area partners that kids can utilize in the Kentucky Lake Area.
 - Work with school systems to develop iPhone and Android pocket apps to connect kids and people to the refuge.
- As fishing tournaments increase in this area, explore ways to connect with families that are accompanying participants.
- Work to develop the current annual waterfowl and bald eagle event into a Birding and Nature 3-day Birding Festival. Work with TN Ornithological Society, area partners and others to hold Festival in winter time. Develop a brand name and keep marketing with all partners Offer different level of birding opportunities. Bring in history, culture,
- Develop Boat and river birding tour from Paris Landing State Park or other State Parks to TNNWR
- Continue to actively participate in Tennessee River Trail Organization which is linking the 9 counties that touch the river to cross-promote the Kentucky Lake area in general.

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- Continue to investigate sharing student, camper partnerships, housing possibilities with Paris Landing SP, Fort Donelson and FS LBL in order to increase help with the VS program.

General Outreach

- Utilize Social media, facebook, twitter, etc, to promote and connect people to the refuge, convey information about refuge events and closures, etc.
- Look into contracting with FS LBL in order to publicize refuge and partner events

Community Outreach

- Continue developing Refuge Discovery Series Programs.
- Reach out to Churches and display info in grocery store
- Determine best paid publicity avenues to promote Refuge and events (ie. Movie screen, bathroom doors, school sporting events publicity) and publicize through Friends funding
- Announcements can go home with every student about events
- Host natural resource or education related meetings (principals, TWRA, education superintendents) at the Refuge Visitor Center
- Host Chamber coffee or other community relations meetings at the Refuge Visitor Center
- Investigate Customer Service Day event to train and orient new volunteers.
- Continue publishing Refuge events through media.

STANDARD 10: VOLUNTEERS AND FRIENDS

Volunteer and refuge support groups fortify the refuge's staff with their gift of time, skills, and energy and are integral to the future of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Refuge staff will initiate and nurture relationships with volunteers and refuge support groups, and will continually support, monitor, and evaluate these groups with the goal of fortifying important refuge activities. The National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-242) strengthens the Refuge System's role in developing effective partnerships with various community groups. Whether through volunteers, refuge support groups, or other important partnerships in the community, refuge personnel will seek to make the refuge an integral part of the community, giving rise to a stronger Refuge System.

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

Volunteers

The Friends of Tennessee provided many volunteers to help Refuge operation and maintenance. The total number of volunteers was 90. The number one priority for volunteers is staffing the visitor center. If additional volunteer resources are secured then their time was utilized for wildlife and habitat work. The loss of the ability to pay a living stipend to volunteers is hampering efforts to recruit volunteers for this work. The Volunteer hours for maintenance was 2,615. The Refuge had an excellent group of resident volunteers and summer interns this year whom assisted with numerous maintenance projects. The RV pad at the new HQ's facility was well utilized this year. The Volunteer hours spent on wildlife-dependent recreation was 4,165. Huge increases were realized in volunteer hours coming in to greet visitors at the new visitor center. For 2016, we anticipate local volunteers will continue to volunteer their time to assist with operating the visitor center and assisting with environmental education programs, interpretive programs, wildlife viewing, and other wildlife dependent recreation activities. Staff will continue to recruit new volunteers throughout the year.



Volunteer hours spent on cultural resources was 40. Due to the large volume of volunteers several of our volunteers were used to train new volunteer staff in the operation of the visitor center and other administrative related projects. With the visitor center, the refuge will require additional volunteers to be trained in visitor center operations and to assist with environmental education programs throughout the year. The total volunteer hours was 8,171.

Partnerships

The refuge is involved in many different types of partnerships with the communities and counties around the refuge. Many of these partnerships directly impacted the visitor services program at the refuge. Examples include: Friends of Tennessee NWR, Friends of Morgan Creek, US Forest Service Land Between the Lakes, Paris Landing State Park, Fort Donelson National Battlefield, Paris-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, Benton County Chamber of Commerce, Henry County Board of Education, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts of America, University of Tennessee Martin, Ducks Unlimited, and Tennessee River Trails Association.

STANDARD 10 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE, STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

CCP Goal 5: Provide personnel, partners, funding, and facilities needed to ensure that the goals and objectives identified in this CCP are achieved.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 5-3): Volunteers and partnerships – Strengthen the refuge’s volunteer programs, friends group, and partnerships by investing an increased portion of staff time into nurturing these promising relationships.

VSP Strategies

Volunteering

- Need Volunteer Coordinator – this could be a volunteer.
- Increase available pool of volunteers.
 - Conduct more volunteer training.
 - Solicit more resident volunteers – Work Kamper News or volunteer.gov.
 - Outreach to community churches and schools that need service hours.
 - Ensure Chamber of Commerce has Refuge Volunteer opportunities.
- Develop strategies to prevent volunteer burn-out.
- Develop running list of projects available that reception volunteers can accomplish.
- Assign volunteers that assist with social media reporting Refuge activities, events, etc.
- Continue to have annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner and develop other means to recognize this critical work and help.
- Continue to work with scouting, birding, photography, or other specialty groups to perform Refuge projects.
- Develop opportunities with organizations like Ducks Unlimited, Quail Forever, NWTF, Tennessee River Trails Association, etc. to complete Refuge projects.

Friends

- Increase Friends membership
 - Continue to conduct special Friend member’s only tours and events.

- Encourage Friend's members to be active at Refuge events to promote membership in the Friend's group.
- Develop strategies to get current members active in refuge events and opportunities.
- Expand Friend's group focus to providing Environmental Education activities on the refuge.
- Encourage Friends Member to act as community advocates.
- Develop capacity within Friends group to coordinate volunteers and activities.
- Continue to have Friend's group write grants.
 - Prioritize projects that grants are needed for and timeline for completion
 - Have key Friend's members participate in NCTC grant writing class
 - Continue to have Friends Group provide bus transportation grants

Partnerships

- Develop efficient mechanisms to cross-promote, share, coordinate, and hold events with area partners
- Bring partners with special expertise to hold Refuge events (hummingbird banding, bluebird, insects, astronomy and butterflies)
- Conduct multi-agency teacher training workshops to provide area teachers with all the area opportunities.
- Work with partners to coordinate volunteers for activities or projects such as fall or spring break special projects on the Refuge.
- Develop strategies to reach out and involve underserved communities – students and their families how can we reach out to non-traditional partners
 - Programs focused on intercity kids in YMCA, Boys and Girls Club in Nashville and Knoxville.
 - TNNWR Friends Group Fishing program off the refuge – for underprivileged kids
 - Reach out to Optimist Buddy and Real Hope Youth Center– Juvenile judge – Vicky Snider
 - Shop with a cop – utilize refuge Law Enforcement personnel to help promote this program.
 - Minority groups – Go into their communities and find out how we can reach out to them and participate in their events
 - Contact County ESL employee about bringing these groups to the refuge
- Continue to partner with area schools to cut out blue bird boxes and construct with younger grades.
- Establish partnerships with local school clubs such as Patriot Excel After High School Club, Mad Scientist, Outdoor Adventure, Kids club, Archery Clubs etc.

STANDARD 11: RECREATION FEE PROGRAM

“The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004” (FLREA) allows land management agencies, such as the National Wildlife Refuge System, to charge fees for entry and certain amenities (user fees). The charging of entrance and user fees at national wildlife refuges can be a helpful management tool if the program is well-managed and implemented.”

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

It is the refuge's goal to provide high quality public services. Currently, the refuge charges an annual administrative fee for refuge hunts at a cost of \$15/year.



STANDARD 11 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1-4-7) Recreation Fee Program - Manage public access to provide a safe human experience, in an environmental appropriate manner to support wildlife-dependent priority public uses while ensuring uses are compatible with the refuge purposes.

VSP Strategies

- Continue to utilize rec fee resources to enhance VS program

STANDARD 12: CONCESSIONS

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

The refuge currently has one Concession on the Refuge located on the Big Sandy Unit at 60 Mansard Island Drive in Springville, TN. This concession has been in operation since 1973 and is currently owned by Frank and Kim Martino. Including the owners, there are 4 people employed. A new contract was signed on 6/22/2015 that allowed a maximum of 100 covered boat slips, 10 moorings, the rental of 6 john boats, 6 outboard motor boats and 4 pontoon boats. The marina operates a store selling gasoline and other essential supplies to boaters. A double wide concrete boat ramp is on refuge with a \$5.00 launch fee charged for use. A portion of the business is located off refuge and consists of cabins, campground and other recreational opportunities,

STANDARD 12 GOAL(S), OBJECTIVE(S), STRATEGIES

CCP Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1) Concessions – Manage concession activities in order to provide a safe human experience, in an environmental appropriate manner to support wildlife-dependent priority public uses while ensuring uses are compatible with the refuge purposes.

VSP Strategies

- Continue to run Mansard Island concessions.

STANDARD 13: COMMERCIAL RECREATIONAL USES

A commercial recreational use is a use that generates revenue or that results in a commodity which is or can be sold for income or revenue. Before considering compatibility, the use must be determined to contribute to the achievement of the refuge purpose or the mission of the Refuge System, as outlined in Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations, 29.1.

To be allowed on a refuge, a commercial use must go beyond the “not materially interfere with...” requirement and must contribute to the achievement of the refuge purpose or mission of the Refuge

System. The contribution must be clearly defined in the justification section of the compatibility determination for any commercial use.

Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, 27.97, Private Operations, prohibits an unauthorized commercial enterprise on any national wildlife refuge. Thus, commercial tours are required to apply for a special use permit (SUP) from the Refuge Manager. By establishing a SUP system, the refuge staff is able to set sustainable limits on the number of permits issued.

In determining if a commercial recreational use is compatible, one way to connect it to the mission of the System is to determine if the commercial recreation use will facilitate one of the wildlife-dependent priority public use activities which are “directly related to the mission of the System.” (Refuge Improvement Act – 1997)

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

The refuge allows commercial fishing on the refuge to assist with removal of rough fish from refuge impoundments. This occurs on the Duck River Unit and particularly in the Duck River bottoms from March 16 to November 14. You can get full details from the compatibility determination in our CCP. The refuge issues up to 6 special use permits per year at a cost of \$50.00 a permit. Most years one to two SUP are issued for this activity.

In 2014, commercial fishermen removed 37,677 lbs. of rough fish (mostly buffalo).
In 2015, commercial fishermen removed 53,488 lbs. of rough fish (mostly buffalo).

Only one SUP was issued in 2016 and the refuge will continue this program as is.

STANDARD 14: WILDERNESS

The Wilderness Act of 1964 directs the Secretary of the Interior, within 10 years, to review every roadless area of 2,024 or more hectares (5,000 or more acres) and every roadless island (regardless of size) within national wildlife refuges and national parks, and to recommend to the President the suitability of each such area or island for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System by later special Acts of Congress. The Act provides criteria for determining suitability and contains provisions related to activities that can be undertaken on a designated area.

The Wilderness Act establishes additional purposes for the designated wilderness areas within refuges (50 CFR 29.12), which “shall be administered for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for the future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use and enjoyment as wilderness.” Proposed wilderness areas are managed so as to protect their wilderness values pending action by Congress.

CURRENT PROGRAM DISCUSSION

The lands within Tennessee NWR were reviewed for their suitability in meeting the criteria for wilderness, as defined by the Wilderness Act of 1964. No lands in the refuge were found to meet these criteria, in particular criterion #3 (5,000 contiguous roadless acres). Therefore, the suitability of refuge lands for wilderness designation is not further analyzed in this plan.



CHAPTER III. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND PROJECT COST SOURCE

This table allows the refuge to view all the strategies together as it relates to the project completion time frames which is the life of the CCP.

Table 1: Strategies Implementation Schedule

Strategies Implementation Schedule																		
PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
VSP Objective Welcome and Orient – (CCP Objectives: 4-6, 4-7, 5-2) - Welcome and Orient – Utilize the Tennessee NWR Visitor Center as the focal point to welcome and orient visitors to the refuge. Increase the number areas where visitors get information about the refuge (social media, webpage, kiosks, interpretive signs, new Duck River Visitor Contact Station), maintain existing interpretive signs, update interpretive signs with current information, and provide clear directions to access the refuge units and public use facilities.																		
Work to develop an entrance area plan which identifies clear directional signs to the main refuges entrances.					X	X	X	X							X	X		
Britton Ford Trail - Add a new information kiosk					X													
Update General refuge brochure – decrease size and update maps and information					X	X					X	X						RecFee
Create a Tear Sheet about the refuge to utilize in the Visitor Center						X	X											RecFee
Continue to utilize Law Enforcement staff to			X															Law Enforcement



Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
welcome and orient visitors and maintain visitor safety																			
Continuously instruct all staff members on courteous visitor contact and conveying information about refuge events			X																
Add new 3-panel kiosk to Visitor Center Parking Lot – this will provide information to refuge visitors during closed hours						X	X												RecFee
<i>Lashlee Springs Artesian Well</i> - Add interpretive signs and two car parking lot							X	X											DM
<i>Mount Zion Church</i> -Add interpretive sign close to church and Title/Entrance sign at road					X			X											Private Individual & RecFee
Chickasaw Trail - Replace Chickasaw trail head kiosk and remove tire bumper in front of trailhead					X	X	X												Annual Maintenance
<i>Mount Zion Church</i> -work in partnership with Friends group on church restoration			X																DM and grants

Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
Bennett's Creek Observation Deck - Add additional interpretive signs						X	X												RecFee
Work with TDOT to install signs at the exits on I-40 and I-24 directing visitors to the Duck River Unit and Visitor Center					X	X	X	X											TDOT
VSP Objective Hunting – (CCP Objective: 4-2) – Increase hunting opportunities for deer. Continue to allow managed, limited hunting for turkey, squirrel, raccoon, and resident Canada geese.																			
Continue to work with an effective contract company to conduct on-line drawing for deer quota hunts			X																RecFee
Continue to charge an annual hunting permit – fee of \$15 to be collected by TWRA State Vendors			X																RecFee
Continue to hold annual hunt meeting with refuge staff			X																
Continue to revise hunt program based on current needs (Earn-a-buck, quota hunts, youth hunts, handicap accessible hunting areas)			X																



Strategies Implementation Schedule																		
PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-3): <u>Fishing</u> – Provide opportunities for fishing on the refuge by maintaining adequate boat launching facilities, bank fishing areas, and over the life of the CCP, provide additional Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant piers to accommodate anglers of all abilities.																		
Develop a priorities list for improving & maintaining launches and concentrate efforts on top priorities.			X		X	X												
Increase outreach to the fisherman to increase awareness about Tennessee NWR.			X															
Replace Henry County Port Informational Sign						X	X											Annual Maintenance
Continue to consider ways to assess a fee for fishing to help maintain boat ramps etc.						X	X											
Continue working with partners to improve boat launches.			X															DM
Assess areas where ADA-compliant piers could be constructed.			X															VFE
Work with partners to establish a courtesy dock to access the Tennessee							X	X	X	X								VFE

Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
NWR Visitor Center.																			
VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-4): <u>Wildlife observation and wildlife photography</u> – Continue to offer opportunities for wildlife observation and photography throughout the refuge. Increase wildlife observation/ photography opportunities by adding a photography blind on the Duck River Unit which is accessed by permit only and a new observation deck on the Busseltown Unit.																			
Set up bird feeding station near Visitor Center – put up trail cameras and link it to FB page.					X	X	X												Friends Group
Link refuge biologist trail camera footage on Tennessee NWR Facebook page.			X																
Put up Osprey pole with nesting platform near Visitor Center					X														Boy Scout Eagle Project
Continue to promote auto tour at Duck River Bottoms.			X																
Update Pictures in Pintail Point Blind.								X	X							X	X		RecFee
Manage vegetation to maintain viewing opportunities at Duck River Bottoms Overlook.					X	X	X	X	X										Annual Maintenance
Construct new observation deck at Busseltown Unit once new impoundments						X	X	X											VFE



Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source		
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029	
are created.																				
Develop tear sheet that has a map with birding sites numbered and a description of what might be seen at each site.					X	X									X	X				RecFee
Work with Friends group to build a photography blind on Duck River Unit where it is close to wildlife but not in danger of being flooded. Make this blind accessible by permit only.					X	X	X													Friends Group
Continue to work with friends group to promote refuge to photography clubs.			X																	
Continue to increase Refuge photo library through working with the Friends group photography contest.			X																	
VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-5): Environmental Education – Utilize the Tennessee NWR Visitor Center to provide environmental education services to the public and areas school, which would include on and offsite field trips and programs, teacher training workshops, environmental education events, and participating in community events. Work with Friends of Tennessee NWR and partners to expand environmental education facilities and opportunities on and near the refuge.																				

Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
Provide onsite environmental education programs to area schools focusing on adjacent counties such as Henry, Benton, Stewart, and Humphries Counties.			X																Partnership with Friends Group
Continue to conduct off-site programs while promoting Tennessee NWR Visitor Center opportunities.			X																Partnership with Friends Group
Utilize refuge as an outdoor classroom using Tennessee NWR Visitor Center as a focal point targeting families and/or small groups			X																Partnership with Friends Group
Increase field trip utilization of Tennessee NWR Visitor Center by providing bus transportation grant money raised through Friends of TN NWR			X																Friends Group
Conduct or offer in-class testing review programs – adaptation, food chain, predator/prey relationships				X	X	X	X												Partnership with Friends Group



Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source			
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029		
etc.																					
Continue to update Refuge programs which are correlated to State of TN standards				X					X						X					X	Partnership with Area School Districts
Promote how environmental programs are part of the education curriculum objectives and can be an extension of learning from the classroom.			X																		Partnership with Area School Districts
Utilizing the Visitor Center, promote teacher continuing education credit through offering environmental education Teacher Training Workshops			X																		Partnership with Area School Districts
Collaborate, connect and conduct outreach to area school systems to promote VC as a quality field trip location			X																		Partnership with Area School Districts
Continue to promote Junior Duck Stamp Program (JDSP)			X																		Partnership with Friends Group

Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source		
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029	
Create promotional flyer for teachers specific to grades K-6, 7-8, and 9-12 explaining refuge field trip opportunities.			X																	Partnership with Area School Districts
Continue to work with, coordinate, and promote area partners environmental education opportunities.			X																	
Develop Evaluation form for EE program collecting feedback from teachers/public.						X	X			X			X					X		Partnership with Area School Districts
Continue to revise, correlate, maintain, and promote critter crates to the public.			X																	
Train student interns and volunteers to conduct on and off-site programs.			X																	
VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-6): Interpretation –Expand on existing interpretive program by developing programs that connect people in surrounding communities such as Henry, Decatur, Benton, Stewart, and Humphries Counties with nature.																				
Connect people with nature using the Tennessee NWR and			X																	



Strategies Implementation Schedule																			
PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
national wildlife refuge system.																			
Utilize Visitor Center exhibits as teaching tools to learn about the refuge.			X																
Provide volunteer learning opportunities to understand refuge activities so they are more able to interpret to public.			X																
Staff Interpretive Training – give all staff an interpretive foundation			X																
VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1): Other Visitor Services – Within the approval of this Visitor Services Plan, ensure all current and future wildlife-dependent uses are appropriate and compatible.																			
Biking – continue to promote bike riding opportunities on the refuge connected with wildlife and nature viewing.					X	X	X	X											
Canoeing, Kayaking, and Stand-up Paddle Boarding – Produce canoe and kayak trails on the refuge from March 15 to November 15, by creating launch areas maps, trails, or brochures that outlines key areas. Consider					X	X	X	X	X										VFE

Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
adding more information for Swamp Creek, Britton Ford Bay, Bennett's Creek Bay, Clear Lake, Grassy Lake, Gaynor's Slough, pool 6, Tie yards, Burton's pond, and Cub Creek.																			
Ensure maps have either directional insets or one big map that shows general directions to these areas on the refuge.						X	X												
Develop CD for general boating, canoeing, kayaking and stand-up Paddle Boarding,						X													
Goecaching – if interest increases develop multi-geocache opportunities divided in three smaller sections by each unit.						X	X	X											Partner with Geocache Volunteer
Hiking Trail Development – Develop ½ mile trail adjacent to Visitor Center along peninsula and include an animal Olympics section (balance beam – squirrels, climbing					X	X	X												Partnership with Friends Group



Strategies Implementation Schedule																			
PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
wall, push-ups like lizard)																			
If interest increases, add to Britton Ford Trail by increasing the ½ mile spur loop creating a figure 8 trail allowing for separate loops for folks to follow. Look to increase the trail 2 more miles.								X	X	X									Partnership with Friends Group
If more interest in Chickasaw Trail, connect up with Bennett's Observation Deck.								X	X										Partnership with Friends Group
Develop hiking trail at Duck River Bottoms if we can find an area that does not flood on a regular basis.								X	X	X									Partnership with Friends Group
VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4, 4-5, 4-6) Outreach – Provide outreach opportunities that promote an understanding and appreciation of fish, wildlife, habitat conservation, and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.																			
Ecotourism As NPS develops “Every Kid in a Park” Program, determine ways the refuge can participate and monopolize on opportunities.					X	X													

Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source		
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029	
As the Chamber develops this region as a destination, ensure that the Refuge is part of the marketing campaign.			X																	
Continue relationship with Local Chambers to market the refuge as part of the Bus Tours for this area. Attend meetings, banquets, and events as possible to market the refuge opportunities.			X																	
Work with the Regional Office to develop iPhone and Android Regional Passport App in coordination with area partners that kids can utilize in the Kentucky Lake Area.						X	X	X	X											VFE Or Friends Group grant
Work with school systems to develop iPhone and Android pocket apps to connect kids and people to the refuge.						X	X	X	X											VFE Or Friends Group grant
As fishing tournaments increase in this area,			X																	



Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source		
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029	
explore ways to connect with families that are accompanying participants.																				
Work to develop the current annual waterfowl and bald eagle event into a Birding and Nature 3-day Birding Festival. Work with TN Ornithological Society, area partners and others to hold Festival in winter time. Develop a brand name and keep marketing with all partners Offer different level of birding opportunities. Bring in history, culture,						X	X	X	X	X										Friends Group and local agency partners
On October 17, 2015 – Develop 70 th Anniversary mini festival – booths and festival				X																Friends Group
Develop Boat and river birding tour from Paris Landing State Park or other State Parks to TNNWR						X	X	X												
Continue to actively participate in Tennessee			X																	

Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
River Trail Organization which is linking the 9 counties that touch the river to cross-promote the Kentucky Lake area in general.																			
General Outreach Utilize Social media, facebook, twitter, etc, to promote and connect people to the refuge, convey information about refuge events and closures, etc.			X																
Look into contracting with FS LBL in order to publicize refuge and partner events					X	X	X	X											VFE
Community Outreach Continue developing Refuge Discovery Series Programs.			X																Friends Group
Reach out to Churches and display info in grocery store					X	X	X	X											
Determine best paid publicity avenues to promote Refuge and																			Partner with Friends Group



Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
events (ie. Movie screen, bathroom doors, school sporting events publicity) and publicize through Friends funding																			
Host natural resource or education related meetings (principals, TWRA, education superintendents) at the Refuge Visitor Center			X																
Host Chamber coffee or other community relations meetings at the Refuge Visitor Center			X																
Investigate Customer Service Day event to train and orient new volunteers.					X	X	X	X											Partner with Friends Group
Continue publishing Refuge events through media.			X																
VSP Objective (CCP Objective 5-3): <u>Volunteers and partnerships</u> – Strengthen the refuge’s volunteer programs, friends group, and partnerships by investing an increased portion of staff time into nurturing these promising relationships.																			
Volunteering Pursue a volunteer coordinator					X	X	X	X	X	X									Partner with Friends Group
Increase available pool of volunteers.			X																

Strategies Implementation Schedule																		
PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
Develop strategies to prevent volunteer burn-out.			X															
Develop running list of projects available that reception volunteers can accomplish.			X															
Assign volunteers that assist with social media reporting Refuge activities, events, etc.					X	X	X	X	X	X								
Continue to have annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner and develop other means to recognize this critical work and help.			X															Partner with Friends Group
Continue to work with scouting, birding, photography, or other specialty groups to perform Refuge projects.			X															Partner with area clubs and groups
Develop opportunities with organizations like Ducks Unlimited, Quail Forever, NWTf, Tennessee Trails Association, etc. to complete Refuge projects.			X															Partner with natural resource organizations
Friends Increase Friends			X															Partner with Friends Group



Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source		
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029	
membership																				
Develop strategies to get current members active in refuge events and opportunities.			X																	Partner with Friends Group
Expand Friend's group focus to providing Environmental Education activities on the refuge.			X																	Partner with Friends Group
Encourage Friends Member to act as community advocates.			X																	Partner with Friends Group
Develop capacity within Friends group to coordinate volunteers and activities.			X																	Partner with Friends Group
Continue to have Friend's group write grants.					X	X	X	X	X											Partner with Friends Group
Partnerships Develop efficient mechanisms to cross-promote, share, coordinate, and hold events with area partners			X																	
Bring partners with special expertise to hold Refuge events (hummingbird			X																	

Strategies Implementation Schedule

PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
banding, bluebird, insects and butterflies)																			
Conduct multi-agency teacher training workshops to provide area teachers with all the area opportunities.						X			X			X			X			X	
Work with partners to coordinate volunteers for activities or projects such as fall or spring break special projects on the Refuge.							X		X		X		X						
Develop strategies to reach out and involve underserved communities – students and their families how can we reach out to non-traditional partners			X																
Continue to partner with area schools to cut out blue bird boxes and construct with younger grades.				X	X	X	X	X	X	X									Partner with Friends Group
Establish partnerships with local school clubs such as Patriot Excel After High			X																



Strategies Implementation Schedule																			
PROJECTS (CCP USFWS 2010)	TIME FRAME FOR PROJECT COMPLETION																	Project Cost Source	
	Day	Week	Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		2029
School Club, Mad Scientist, Outdoor Adventure, Kids club, etc.																			
VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1-4-7) Recreation Fee Program - Manage public access to provide a safe human experience, in an environmental appropriate manner to support wildlife-dependent priority public uses while ensuring uses are compatible with the refuge purposes.																			
Continue to utilize rec fee resources to enhance VS program			X																RecFee
VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1) Concessions – Manage concession activities in order to provide a safe human experience, in an environmental appropriate manner to support wildlife-dependent priority public uses while ensuring uses are compatible with the refuge purposes																			
Continue to run Mansard Island concessions			X																

CHAPTER IV. VISITOR SERVICES ANNUAL WORK PLAN

This table allows the individual responsible for the visitor services program to see at a glance what are the plans for the year and associated deadlines for the task.

Table 2. Visitor Services Annual Work Plan

Visitor Services Annual Work Plan - Fiscal Year 2017														
Category	Event	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	Comments
Annual Events	National Wildlife Refuge Week										X			
	Bald Eagle/Waterfowl Tour	X					X							
	Turkey Hunt			X						X	X	X		
	Deer, Raccoon, Squirrel Hunt									X	X	X		
	Resident Goose Hunt									X				
	Public Fishing Derby						X							
	Archery Event									X				
	Canoe/Kayak Event							X						
	Teacher Training Workshops						X	X						
	Bluebird Program			X										
	Hummingbird Banding									X				
	Ducks Unlimited Greenwings Banding								X					
	Friends Banding								X					
	Boyscout Work Day					X								
	Astronomy Program											X		
	Trim a Tree for Wildlife												X	
Ted Endell Fishing Derby						X								
Jr Duck Stamp			X			X								
Required Reporting	Fee Recreation Report		X											
	RAPP								X					



Visitor Services Annual Work Plan - Fiscal Year 2017

Category	Event	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	Comments
	Monthly Activity Report		X											
Required Training	Orientation to the Privacy Act							X						
	Record Management Awareness							X						
	IT/FISSA	X												
	Ethics (4hrs)									X				
Annual Meetings	Hunt meeting		X											
	Volunteer Recognition Day		X											
Routine Activities	Article for Friend Group Newsletter			X			X			X			X	
	Article for Egrits			X					X					
	School programs and Field Trips	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
	Community programs													
	Friends Group Meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Special Projects	Construct Busseltown Deck						X	X	X					
	Enhance new hiking trail		X	X	X	X								
	Morgan Creek Boat Ramp improvements							X	X	X				

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. LIST OF PREPARERS

Joan Stevens Park Ranger, TN NWR Complex
Tina Chouinard Natural Resource Planner, TN NWR Complex

Visitor Service Review Participants

Joan Stevens, Park Ranger, TN NWR Complex
Barron Crawford, Project Leader, TN NWR Complex
Troy Littrell, Deputy Project Leader, TN NWR Complex
Kevin Lowry, Visitor Service Specialist, USFWS, R4
Sharon Waltrip VS Manager, Forest Service, Land Between the Lakes
Richard Lomax, Brandon Springs Manager, Forest Service, Land Between the Lakes
Ski Witzofski, Vice-President, Friends of TN NWR
Vickie Miller, President, Friends of TN NWR
Tara Dowdy, Refuge Ranger, Reelfoot NWR
Stacey Hayden, Education Specialist, Clarks River NWR
Joan Williams, Park Manager, Paris Landing State Park
Jennifer Wheatley, Executive Director, Paris Henry County Chamber of Commerce
Doug Richardson, Supervisory Park Ranger, National Park Service, Fort Donaldson
Tina Chouinard, Planner, USFWS
Betty Jordan, Supervisor of Instruction, Benton County Board of Education
Vicki Jo Stevens, Director, Camp Hazelwood ECO



APPENDIX B. APPROPRIATE USE DETERMINATIONS

Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge Appropriate Use Determination

An appropriate use determination is the initial decision process a refuge manager follows when first considering whether or not to allow a proposed use on a refuge. The refuge manager must find that a use is appropriate before undertaking a compatibility review of the use. This process clarifies and expands on the compatibility determination process by describing when refuge managers should deny a proposed use without determining compatibility. If a proposed use is not appropriate, it will not be allowed and a compatibility determination will not be undertaken.

Except for the uses noted below, the refuge manager must decide if a new or existing use is an appropriate refuge use. If an existing use is not appropriate, the refuge manager will eliminate or modify the use as expeditiously as practicable. If a new use is not appropriate, the refuge manager will deny the use without determining compatibility. Uses that have been administratively determined to be appropriate are:

Six wildlife-dependent recreational uses - As defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, the six wildlife-dependent recreational uses (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation) are determined to be appropriate. However, the refuge manager must still determine if these uses are compatible.

Take of fish and wildlife under state regulations - States have regulations concerning take of wildlife that includes hunting, fishing, and trapping. The Service considers take of wildlife under such regulations appropriate. However, the refuge manager must determine if the activity is compatible before allowing it on a refuge.

Statutory Authorities for this policy:

National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, 16 U.S.C. §668dd-668ee. This law provides the authority for establishing policies and regulations governing refuge uses, including the authority to prohibit certain harmful activities. The Act does not authorize any particular use, but rather authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to allow uses only when they are compatible and “under such regulations as he may prescribe.” This law specifically identifies certain public uses that, when compatible, are legitimate and appropriate uses within the Refuge System. The law states “. . . it is the policy of the United States that . . . compatible wildlife-dependent recreation is a legitimate and appropriate general public use of the System . . . compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses are the priority general public uses of the System and shall receive priority consideration in refuge planning and management; and . . . when the Secretary determines that a proposed wildlife-dependent recreational use is a compatible use within a refuge, that activity should be facilitated . . . the Secretary shall . . . ensure that priority general public uses of the System receive enhanced consideration over other general public uses in planning and management within the System . . .” The law also states “in administering the System, the Secretary is authorized to take the following actions: . . . issue regulations to carry out this Act.” This policy implements the standards set in the Act by providing enhanced consideration of priority general public uses and ensuring other public uses do not interfere with our ability to provide quality, wildlife-dependent recreational uses.

Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, 16 U.S.C. 460k. The Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer refuges, hatcheries, and other conservation areas for recreational use, when such uses do not interfere with the area's primary purposes. It authorizes construction and maintenance of recreational facilities and the acquisition of land for incidental fish and wildlife oriented recreational development or protection of natural resources. It also authorizes the charging of fees for public uses.

Other Statutes that Establish Refuges, including the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) (16 U.S.C. §410hh - 410hh-5, 460 mm - 460mm-4, 539-539e, and 3101 - 3233; 43 U.S.C. 1631 et seq.).

Executive Orders. The Service must comply with Executive Order 11644 when allowing use of off-highway vehicles on refuges. This order requires the Service to designate areas as open or closed to off-highway vehicles in order to protect refuge resources, promote safety, and minimize conflict among the various refuge users; monitor the effects of these uses once they are allowed; and amend or rescind any area designation as necessary based on the information gathered. Furthermore, Executive Order 11989 requires the Service to close areas to off-highway vehicles when it is determined that the use causes or will cause considerable adverse effects on the soil, vegetation, wildlife, habitat, or cultural or historic resources. Statutes, such as ANILCA, take precedence over executive orders.

Definitions:

Appropriate Use

A proposed or existing use on a refuge that meets at least one of the following four conditions.

- 1) The use is a wildlife-dependent recreational use as identified in the Improvement Act.
- 2) The use contributes to fulfilling the refuge purpose(s), the Refuge System mission, or goals or objectives described in a refuge management plan approved after October 9, 1997, the date the Improvement Act was signed into law.
- 3) The use involves the take of fish and wildlife under state regulations.
- 4) The use has been found to be appropriate as specified in section 1.11.

Native American. American Indians in the conterminous United States and Alaska Natives (including Aleuts, Eskimos, and Indians) who are members of federally recognized tribes.

Priority General Public Use. A compatible wildlife-dependent recreational use of a refuge involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

Quality. The criteria used to determine a quality recreational experience include:

- Promotes safety of participants, other visitors, and facilities.
- Promotes compliance with applicable laws and regulations and responsible behavior.
- Minimizes or eliminates conflicts with fish and wildlife population or habitat goals or objectives in a plan approved after 1997.
- Minimizes or eliminates conflicts with other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation.
- Minimizes conflicts with neighboring landowners.
- Promotes accessibility and availability to a broad spectrum of the American people.
- Promotes resource stewardship and conservation.



Promotes public understanding and increases public appreciation of America's natural resources and the Service's role in managing and protecting these resources.

Provides reliable/reasonable opportunities to experience wildlife.

Uses facilities that are accessible and blend into the natural setting.

Uses visitor satisfaction to help define and evaluate programs.

Wildlife-Dependent Recreational Use. As defined by the Improvement Act, a use of a refuge involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation.

FINDING OF APPROPRIATENESS OF A REFUGE USE

Refuge Name: Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge

Use: Canoeing, Kayaking, and Paddle Boating

This form is not required for wildlife-dependent recreational uses, take regulated by the State, or uses already described in a refuge CCP or step-down management plan approved after October 9, 1997.

Decision Criteria:	YES	NO
(a) Do we have jurisdiction over the use?	x	
(b) Does the use comply with applicable laws and regulations (Federal, State, Tribal, and local)?	x	
(c) Is the use consistent with applicable executive orders and Department and Service policies?	x	
(d) Is the use consistent with public safety?	x	
(e) Is the use consistent with goals and objectives in an approved management plan or other document?	x	
(f) Has an earlier documented analysis not denied the use or is this the first time the use has been proposed?	x	
(g) Is the use manageable within available budget and staff?	x	
(h) Will this be manageable in the future within existing resources?	x	
(i) Does the use contribute to the public's understanding and appreciation of the refuge's natural or cultural resources, or is the use beneficial to the refuge's natural or cultural resources?	x	
(j) Can the use be accommodated without impairing existing wildlife-dependent recreational uses or reducing the potential to provide quality (see section 1.6D, 603 FW 1, for description), compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation into the future?	x	

Where we do not have jurisdiction over the use ["no" to (a)], there is no need to evaluate it further as we cannot control the use. Uses that are illegal, inconsistent with existing policy, or unsafe ["no" to (b), (c), or (d)] may not be found appropriate. If the answer is "no" to any of the other questions above, we will **generally** not allow the use.

If indicated, the refuge manager has consulted with State fish and wildlife agencies. **Yes** x **No**

When the refuge manager finds the use appropriate based on sound professional judgment, the refuge manager must justify the use in writing on an attached sheet and obtain the refuge supervisor's concurrence.

Based on an overall assessment of these factors, my summary conclusion is that the proposed use is:

Not Appropriate **Appropriate** x

Refuge Manager: _____ Date: _____

If found to be **Not Appropriate**, the refuge supervisor does not need to sign concurrence if the use is a new use. If an existing use is found **Not Appropriate** outside the CCP process, the refuge supervisor must sign concurrence. If found to be **Appropriate**, the refuge supervisor must sign concurrence.

Refuge Supervisor: _____ Date: _____

A compatibility determination is required before the use may be allowed.



APPENDIX C. COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

TENNESSEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Uses: Canoeing, Kayaking, and Paddle Boating

Refuge Name: Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge Complex – Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge Benton, Decatur, Henry, Humphreys Counties, Tennessee.

Date Established: 1945.

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Migratory Bird Conservation Act, Refuge Recreation Act, Executive Order 9670.

Refuge Purpose: "... as a refuge and wildlife management area for migratory birds and other wildlife ..." (Executive Order 9670, dated Dec. 28, 1945)

"... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

"... suitable for (1) incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, (2) the protection of natural resources, (3) the conservation of endangered species or threatened species ..." 16 U.S.C. § 460k-1 "... the Secretary ... may accept and use ... real ... property. Such acceptance may be accomplished under the terms and conditions of restrictive covenants imposed by donors ..." 16 U.S.C. § 460k-2 (Refuge Recreation Act (16 U.S.C. § 460k-460k-4), as amended).

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission: The mission of the Refuge System, as defined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, is:

... 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.

Other Applicable Laws, Regulations, and Policies:

Antiquities Act of 1906 (34 Stat. 225)

Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (15 U.S.C. 703-711; 40 Stat. 755)

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 (16 U.S.C. 715r; 45 Stat. 1222)

Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act of 1934 (16 U.S.C. 718-178h; 48 Stat. 451)

Criminal Code Provisions of 1940 (18 U.S.C. 41)

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 668-668d; 54 Stat. 250)

Refuge Trespass Act of June 25, 1948 (18 U.S.C. 41; 62 Stat. 686)

Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j; 70 Stat. 1119)

Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4; 76 Stat. 653)

Wilderness Act (16 U.S.C. 1131; 78 Stat. 890)

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470, et seq.; 80 Stat. 915)

National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd, 668ee; 80 Stat. 927)
National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321, et seq.; 83 Stat. 852)
Use of Off-road Vehicles on Public Lands (Executive Order 11644, as amended by Executive Order 10989)
Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.; 87 Stat. 884)
Refuge Revenue Sharing Act of 1935, as amended in 1978 (16 U.S.C. 715s; 92 Stat. 1319)
National Wildlife Refuge Regulations for the Most Recent Fiscal Year (50 CFR Subchapter C; 43 CFR 3101.3-3)
Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (S.B. 740)
North American Wetlands Conservation Act of 1990
Food Security Act (Farm Bill) of 1990 as amended (HR 2100)
The Property Clause of the U.S. Constitution Article IV 3, Clause 2
The Commerce Clause of the U.S. Constitution Article 1, Section 8
The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-57, USC668dd)
Executive Order 12996, Management and General Public Use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, March 25, 1996
Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 25-33
Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979
Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990

Public Review and Comment: The compatibility determination for Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge will be available for public review and comment for a minimum of 15 days.

Description of Use: *Canoeing, Kayaking, and Paddle Boating*

Kayaking, canoeing, and paddling allow the general public access through and around the refuge's waterways for wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and recreation. Access to the refuge will be allowed during daylight hours when the refuge is open to the public, or after dark, on a case-by-case basis, as authorized by the refuge manager. Kayaks, pirogues, canoes and other paddling boats used by the general public for these recreational purposes can be transported through the refuge's designated travel routes on motorized vehicles that do not exceed the weight and size limits for the roads. Access through or entry on all or portions of individual areas may be temporarily suspended, by posting, upon occasions of unusual or critical conditions affecting land, water, vegetation, wildlife/plant populations, or public safety.

Availability of Resources: Portions of the refuge have been opened to the public since they were acquired. Thus, roads, access trails, parking lots, signs, and other infrastructure, as well as staff to enforce regulations and maintain these facilities have been provided by the Service.

Designated launch and recovery sites for paddling activities, and other facilities, as well as educational/interpretive signs in these areas, are being addressed in the comprehensive conservation plan. Through the comprehensive conservation planning process, the Service recognizes these needs and recommends solutions to improve public access opportunities.

Anticipated Effects of the Use: Access to the refuge for the purpose of launching non-commercial paddling boats on designated roads of travel will cause minimal effects to plant and wildlife species. Access for paddling is typically by individuals or small groups. On average they transport one to four kayaks or one to two canoes or small paddled boats on top of their motorized vehicles or tow them on small trailers. Within the non-restricted areas of the refuge,



the designated routes of travel end in established parking lot areas, which, in turn, have strategically placed barriers that prevent vehicles from driving onto the foot trails. Based on biological data, conservation management plans, unreasonable harassment of wildlife, or destruction of the habitat, the refuge manager may restrict the use or close some areas from this and other public use, if it is determined that they could have negative effects on the resources, and bird nesting and/or other wildlife activities.

Damage to habitat by walking or dragging these small boats such as a kayak/canoe/pirogue to and from the launch sites is minimal and temporary. Damage to vegetation by individuals paddling through the areas is minimal and temporary. There is some temporary disturbance to wildlife due to human activity on the land and on the water (e.g., flushing wildlife from cover); however, the public access for paddling should not create unreasonable impacts.

Determination (check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

- The refuge will receive no economic gain from this use.
- Waterfowl sanctuaries are closed to all public entry.

Justification: The purpose of developing the draft CD is to ensure that only appropriate and compatible uses to occur on Tennessee NWR in compliance with the outlined stipulations in order to ensure that impacts of the proposed use are minimized, that the proposed use does not detract from or materially interfere with the purposes of Tennessee NWR, and that the proposed use contributes to the purposes of the Tennessee NWR and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

NEPA Compliance for Refuge Use Description: *Place an X in appropriate space.*

Categorical Exclusion without Environmental Action Statement

Categorical Exclusion and Environmental Action Statement

Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision

Mandatory 10-Year Re-evaluation Date: _____

Approval of Compatibility Determinations

The signature of approval is for the compatibility determination considered within the VSP for Tennessee NWR. The VSP is a step-down management plan to the Comprehensive Conservation Plan (USFWS 2010) and accompanying Environmental Assessment (USFWS 2009). If the descriptive use is considered for compatibility outside of the VSP, this approval signature becomes part of that determination.

Refuge Manager: _____
(Signature/Date)

Regional Compatibility
Coordinator: _____
(Signature/Date)

Refuge Supervisor: _____
(Signature/Date)

Regional Chief, National
Wildlife Refuge System,
Southeast Region: _____
(Signature/Date)



APPENDIX D. ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION STATEMENT

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, 516 DM 2.3A, 516 DM 2 Appendix 1, and 516 DM 6 Appendix 1.4.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE.

In the CCP, the proposed action was to manage the refuge based on sound science for the conservation of a structurally and species diverse bottomland hardwood and open wetland habitat for migratory birds and resident wildlife. A focused effort will be placed on reducing invasive species, which are threatening the biological integrity of the refuge. Baseline inventories and monitoring of management actions will be completed to gain information on a variety of species, from reptiles and amphibians to invertebrates and several species of concern. When compatible, the wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation will be provided and enhanced, while achieving the refuge purpose and remaining consistent with existing laws, Service policies, and sound biological principles

The CCP has defined goals, objectives and strategies to achieve the stated action. The actions further detailed in the HMP have been identified, addressed, and authorized by the Tennessee NWR CCP and accompanying Environmental Assessment (USFWS 2010). The VSP expands upon and clarifies the intent, goals, objectives, and strategies of the Refuge's CCP. The list below provides a crosswalk between the VSP and CCP goal and objectives. These include:

<p>Goal 4: Provide appropriate and compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, environmental education, and interpretation that foster an appreciation for wildlife and habitat conservation.</p>	<p>Objective 4-1: <u>Visitor services</u> – Within 5 years of the date of this CCP, draft, approve, and begin to implement a new Visitor Services Plan using the current format for such documents.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-2: <u>Hunting</u> – Increase hunting opportunities for deer. Continue to allow managed, limited hunting for turkey, squirrel, raccoon, and resident Canada geese.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-3: <u>Fishing</u> – Provide opportunities for fishing on the refuge by furnishing adequate boat launching facilities, bank fishing areas, and over the life of the CCP, provide additional Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant piers to accommodate anglers of all abilities.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-4: <u>Wildlife observation and wildlife photography</u> – Continue to offer opportunities for wildlife observation and</p>

	<p>photography throughout the refuge. Increase wildlife observation/ photography opportunities with blinds and a boardwalk. Continue to develop auto tour at Duck River Bottoms.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-5: <u>Environmental Education</u> – Continue to provide environmental education services to the public, including limited visits to schools, workshops, and onsite and offsite environmental education programs. Work with partners to expand environmental education facilities and opportunities on and near the refuge.</p>
	<p>Objective 4-6: <u>Interpretation</u> – Expand on existing interpretive program.</p> <p>Objective 4-7: <u>Visitor center and visitor contact station</u> – Within 5 years of the date of this CCP, work to construct a combined headquarters and visitor center, incorporating “green” technology, on the Big Sandy Unit, and within 15 years of the date of this CCP, build a visitor contact station at the Duck River Unit.</p>
<p>Goal 5: Provide personnel, partners, funding, and facilities needed to ensure that the goals and objectives identified in this CCP are achieved.</p>	<p>Objective 5-2: <u>Facilities, equipment and infrastructure</u> – Maintain existing facilities, equipment and infrastructure. Add headquarters/visitor center and Duck River visitor contact station and replace bunkhouse. In addition, replace Duck River office/maintenance facility and add equipment listed under strategies.</p> <p>Objective 5-3: <u>Volunteers and partnerships</u> – Strengthen the refuge’s volunteer programs, friends group, and partnerships by investing an increased portion of staff time into nurturing these promising relationships.</p>

VSP Objective Welcome and Orient – (CCP Objectives: 4-6, 4-7, 5-2) - Welcome and Orient – Utilize the Tennessee NWR Visitor Center as the focal point to welcome and orient visitors to the refuge. Increase the number areas where visitors get information about the refuge (social media, webpage, kiosks, interpretive signs, new Duck River Visitor Contact Station), maintain existing interpretive signs, update interpretive signs with current information, and provide clear directions to access the refuge units and public use facilities.



VSP Objective Hunting – (CCP Objective 4-2): Hunting – Increase hunting opportunities for deer. Continue to allow managed, limited hunting for turkey, squirrel, raccoon, and resident Canada geese.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-3): Fishing – Provide opportunities for fishing on the refuge by maintaining adequate boat launching facilities, bank fishing areas, and over the life of the CCP, provide additional Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant piers to accommodate anglers of all abilities.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-4): Wildlife observation and wildlife photography – Continue to offer opportunities for wildlife observation and photography throughout the refuge. Increase wildlife observation/ photography opportunities by adding a photography blind on the Duck River Unit which is accessed by permit only and a new observation deck on the Busseltown Unit.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-5): Environmental Education – Utilize the Tennessee NWR Visitor Center to provide environmental education services to the public and areas school, which would include on and offsite field trips and programs, teacher training workshops, environmental education events, and participating in community events. Work with Friends of Tennessee NWR and partners to expand environmental education facilities and opportunities on and near the refuge.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-6): Interpretation –Expand on existing interpretive program by developing programs that connect people in surrounding communities such as Henry, Decatur, Benton, Stewart, and Humphries Counties with nature.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1): Other Visitor Services – Within the approval of this Visitor Services Plan, ensure all current and future wildlife-dependent uses are appropriate and compatible.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4, 4-5, 4-6) Outreach – Provide outreach opportunities that promote an understanding and appreciation of fish, wildlife, habitat conservation, and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 5-3): Volunteers and partnerships – Strengthen the refuge's volunteer programs, friends group, and partnerships by investing an increased portion of staff time into nurturing these promising relationships.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1-4-7) Recreation Fee Program - Manage public access to provide a safe human experience, in an environmental appropriate manner to support wildlife-dependent priority public uses while ensuring uses are compatible with the refuge purposes.

VSP Objective (CCP Objective 4-1) Concessions – Manage concession activities in order to provide a safe human experience, in an environmental appropriate manner to support wildlife-dependent priority public uses while ensuring uses are compatible with the refuge purposes.

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION(S).

Categorical Exclusion Department Manual 516 DM 6, Appendix 1 Section 1.4 B (10), which states “the issuance of new or revised site, unit, or activity-specific management plans for public use, land use, or other management activities when only minor changes are planned.

Examples could include an amended public use plan or fire management plan.”, is applicable to implementation to the proposed action.

Consistent with Categorical Exclusion (516 DM 6, Appendix 1 Section 1.4 B (10)) the VSP is a step-down management plan which provides guidance for implementation of the general goals, objectives, and strategies established in the CCP, serving to further refine those components of the CPP specific to visitor services. This VSP does not trigger an Exception to the Categorical Exclusions listed in 516 DM 2 Appendix 2.

Minor changes or refinements to the CCP in this activity-specific management plan include:

Visitor Services objectives are further refined by providing numerical parameter values that more clearly define the originating objective statement.

Visitor Services objectives are restated so as to combine appropriate objectives or split complicated objectives to provide improved clarity in the context of the VSP.

Specific Visitor Services guidance, strategies, and implementation schedules to meet the CCP goals and objectives are included (e.g. location, timing, frequency, and types of activities).

All details are consistent with the CCP and serve to provide the further detail necessary to guide the refuge in application of the intended strategies for the purpose of meeting the visitor services objectives.

PERMITS/APPROVALS.

Endangered Species Act, Intra-Service Section 7 Consultation was conducted and signed December 2, 2009, during the CCP process. This Section 7 was updated during the Refuge Habitat Management Planning Process (USFWS 2015). The determination was a concurrence that the CCP may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect the following species:

- Orangefoot pimpleback mussel
- Pygmy madtom
- Rough pigtoe mussel
- Ring pink mussel
- Least tern
- Piping plover
- Indiana bat
- Gray bat
- Northern Long-eared bat

Other Items to include that should be listed and can be found in the EAS accompanying the final CCP (USFWS 2010):

Executive Orders 11988/11990 – June 1, 2010

Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands, June 1, 2010

Form DI-711, Intergovernmental Notice of Proposed Action, June 1, 2010

National Historic Preservation Act, Protection of Cultural Resources, June 1, 2010

Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment for TN NWR, June 7, 2010.



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/INTERAGENCY COORDINATION.

The proposed VSP is a step-down of the approved CCP for Tennessee NWR. The development and approval of the CCP included appropriate NEPA documentation and public involvement. An Environmental Assessment was developed (USFWS 2009) which proposed and addressed management alternatives and environmental consequences. Public involvement included public notification to prepare a CCP for the refuge was published through a notice of intent in the *Federal Register* on April 2, 2008. The core planning team then held a series of three public scoping meetings in Paris, Parsons, and New Johnsonville, Tennessee, on May 5, 6, and 7, 2008, respectively.

The Draft CCP/EA and the draft compatibility determinations were made available for public review beginning June 7, 2010 and ending July 7, 2010 (75 FR 32201). A news release was sent out to local, state, and regional newspapers, two online media outlets, and four local radio networks. Announcements of the Draft CCP/EA were made in the *Paris Post Intelligencer*, *Camden Chronicle*, *Decatur City Chronicle*, *News Democrat*, and the *McKenzie Banner* during June 2010.

Copies of the plan were posted at refuge headquarters and on the Fish and Wildlife Service website, <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/planning/CCP/>, and more than 100 copies of the Draft CCP/EA were distributed to local landowners, the public, and local, state, and federal agencies. A total of 43 respondents, consisting of the Service, TWRA, Friends of Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, West Tennessee Fur Takers of America, TVA, Tennessee Wildlife Federation, and local citizens, submitted written comments on the Draft CCP/EA by mail or e-mail. Appendix D, Public Involvement in the CCP (USFWS 2010), summarizes the comments from these public meetings, as well as additional information regarding the overall planning process.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS.

Supporting documents for this determination include relevant office file material and the following key references:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2004. Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, Visitor Services Plan.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2010. Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, Comprehensive Conservation Plan.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2009. Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2015. Tennessee National Wildlife Refuge, Habitat Management Plan.

Project Leader

Date

Regional Refuge NEPA Coordinator

Date

Regional Chief, Southeast Region

Date