

DRAFT COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Hunting

Refuge Name: Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies): 16 U.S.C. 715d; 16 U.S.C. 644; and 16 U.S.C. 460k-1

Refuge Purpose(s): "...for uses as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act).

"...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,..." 16 U.S.C. 664 (Fish and Wildlife Coordination 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...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 National Wildlife Refuge System 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."

Description of Use: To allow migratory game bird, upland game, and big game hunting on selected divisions of Two Rivers NWR.

Hunting has been legislated as a priority public use on national wildlife refuges, where compatible with the refuge purpose. This use is legitimate and appropriate, and is dependent upon healthy wildlife populations. Three divisions of Two Rivers NWR offer opportunities for hunting.

All hunting programs conducted on refuge lands and waters are in compliance with applicable state and special refuge regulations.

The refuge is open to public use during daylight hours only, and is closed to all nighttime hunting.

Hunter safety is of paramount concern to refuge staff, hunters afield, and refuge neighbors. Hunting seasons are further regulated on refuge lands by time and space so as to reduce or eliminate any conflicts with other public uses or wildlife species.

Migratory game bird hunting is permitted on the Apple Creek Division and hunted portion of Calhoun Division.

Upland game hunting is permitted on the Apple Creek Division and hunted portion of Calhoun Division. Upland game includes small game, furbearers, wild turkey and non-migratory game birds.

Hunting for wild turkey is permitted on Apple Creek Division, Clarksville Island Division and hunted portion of Calhoun Division.

Big game hunting for whitetail deer is permitted on Apple Creek Division, Clarksville Island Division and hunted portion of Calhoun Division.

The refuge may provide special hunts as necessary in order to maintain healthy wildlife populations. Initiation of additional refuge hunting programs may be employed after it has been biologically determined that habitat management objectives cannot be achieved due to an excessive population level. Providing hunting opportunities for persons with disabilities and youth is a high priority for the refuge.

Properly administered hunting programs can instill a healthy regard and view of the wildlife resource, and assist in meeting refuge and Service management goals. These user groups can become a vocal advocacy for management when they understand their role in the larger picture.

Availability of Resources: Funds have been available to maintain existing program level, and periodic funds have been available to adequately maintain existing facilities. Additional opportunity outlined in the Hunting Chapter of the Visitor Services Plan is not a significant change from past management and will not require additional funds, per say. Law enforcement coverage remains a concern on the refuge, and will be monitored to ensure that adequate enforcement is available to maintain compatibility of the program.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use: No negative physical impacts on refuge lands or interests are expected to occur. FWS officers will monitor and regulate numbers of participants to levels consistent with safe use of a specific area, and public use of motorized vehicles will be strictly limited to surfaced roads or prepared parking areas. All travel throughout the refuge divisions will be by foot, only. Boat access sites will be limited to those in existing public use areas or those developed by the refuge. Visitors are required to take trash with them when they leave. Litter will be disposed of, as necessary.

Properly regulated hunting programs will provide a positive benefit by, in some cases, reducing population levels to the carrying capacity of the land, or division, where they are found.

Public Review and Comment: Original determination was prepared and signed in 2004 in conjunction with the refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment. This updated determination was prepared and reviewed in conjunction with the Hunting Chapter of the Visitor Services Plan for Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge, and accompanying Environmental Assessment. The draft compatibility determination, hunting chapter and environmental assessment were available for a 30-day review and comment period.

Determination:

_____ Use is Not Compatible

X Use is Compatible with Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility: The following stipulations are required to ensure compatibility:

1. Wildlife populations will be monitored with the state to ensure healthy game populations exist, without depleting the resource below a point of normal recruitment/recovery.
2. Law enforcement patrols will be conducted by state and federal officers to ensure compliance with hunting regulations and refuge special use regulations.
3. Any hunting program may be immediately canceled if, in the judgment of the refuge manager, it causes disturbance to wildlife populations, or harm to other resources beyond that associated with normal entry/access to the area.
4. Special signs will be erected where necessary, to provide information to hunters regarding regulations, boundaries and closed areas.
5. Follow regulations pertaining to hunting on all National Wildlife Refuges and Refuge specific regulations for Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 50 CFR 32.32.

Justification: Public hunting on selected areas of Two Rivers NWR is an acceptable form of wildlife-oriented recreation which has been found compatible with the purpose for which the refuge was established. Hunting of big game animals is a viable management tool in reducing the numbers of whitetail deer to levels consistent with achieving habitat management objectives and with social and safety factors (deer/vehicle collisions in the vicinity of the refuge divisions). When the stipulations listed above are fulfilled, little or no adverse effects to other refuge programs or wildlife species will occur.

Signature:

Refuge Manager: _____

(Signature and Date)

Concurrence:

Regional Chief: _____

(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2028