

COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Trapping of nuisance wildlife

Refuge Name: Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Executive Order 7563 established Swan Lake National Wildlife Refuge on February 27, 1937.

Refuge Purposes:

- "... as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife: ..." Executive Order 7563, dated Feb. 27, 1937
- "... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. 715d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)
- "... particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird management program." 16 U.S.C. 667b (An Act Authorizing the Transfer of Certain Real Property for Wildlife)

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:

Is the use a wildlife-dependent public use?

No. Trapping is not a priority wildlife-dependent public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System as defined by the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997.

Where would the use be conducted?

Trapping would occur in and around locations where wildlife (such as beaver or muskrats) are hampering efforts to achieve Refuge land and water management objectives. Typically, along roads, levees, and water control structures. Trapping may occur around Refuge buildings where wildlife become a nuisance.

When would the use be conducted?

Trapping would be used, at the Refuge Manager's discretion, whenever necessary to eliminate nuisance wildlife that is hampering efforts to achieve Refuge land and water management objectives. Trapping could occur whenever a problem arises. Live trapping and relocation is the first preference when dealing with nuisance animals. If lethal trapping is necessary it would occur during Missouri furbearer season if possible, but may occur at other times if necessary to meet Refuge management objectives.

How would the use be conducted?

The use would occur whenever necessary and at the discretion of the Refuge Manager through issuance of a Special Use Permit to a qualified trapper. Trapping would be used only in specific locations to remove or eliminate wildlife hampering Refuge management objectives. Live trapping and relocation is the first preference when dealing with nuisance animals. This work would be done by Service employees or through contract with qualified individuals. Animals would be relocated to other outlying fee title properties or to other sites with willing landowners and suitable habitat. If live trapping efforts are not successful in removing the nuisance animal, lethal methods will be employed. In most circumstances this would occur during Missouri furbearer season, and would be done by qualified trappers. If lethal trapping is necessary outside of furbearer season the work would be done through a paid contract. The use of snares on the Refuge is prohibited. The approved trapping methods are qualified under State regulation as to trap size and types of allowable sets in order to protect non-target species, and provide for the safe use of the area by others.

Why is this use being proposed?

Some furbearers cause damage to dikes and water control structures through burrowing and, in the case of beavers, through dam building or associated flooding. Trapping is used as a management tool to remove or eliminate wildlife hampering Refuge management activities.

Availability of Resources:

Sufficient staff exists to issue the required permits, and oversee this periodic use. Facilities and staff are currently available to provide access, maintain roads, parking lots, and secondary access roads.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

How does trapping affect Refuge purposes and the NWRS mission?

The Refuge was established to provide for the needs of migratory birds and other wildlife. Trapping does not adversely affect the ability of the Refuge to fulfill this purpose, and is employed as a tool to help accomplish Refuge management objectives. National Wildlife Refuges are managed first and foremost for wildlife (USFWS 2001). But the focus is on wildlife populations not individuals (USFWS 1992). Trapping causes mortality of individual animals, but at Swan Lake NWR its use is limited to instances where wildlife are hampering Refuge management objectives, and it does not threaten the perpetuation of wildlife populations.

How does trapping affect fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats; and the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge/NWRS?

Wildlife, plants, and habitat

Trapping would be done in support of Refuge management objectives and is expected to improve or help maintain habitats of many wildlife species. Any lethal trapping would cause mortality of targeted species and in some cases is likely to cause mortality of non-targeted species. In either case, mortality of individuals is not expected to adversely affect wildlife populations on the Refuge. Trapping is expected to benefit Refuge habitats in those areas where wildlife (such as beaver) are hampering Refuge management objectives.

Disturbance

In *Managing Visitor Use and Disturbance of Waterbirds: A Literature Review of Impacts and Mitigations* DeLong (2002) includes a summary of effects on wildlife from disturbance from various forms of recreation. The author documents that disturbance can alter behavior (e.g. foraging time), population structure, and distribution patterns of wildlife. It is probable that trapping along with all other public uses of the Refuge would cause some or all of these effects to some degree on Refuge wildlife. A number of measures mitigate these effects. The use occurs at the discretion of the Refuge Manager and is limited to specific locations and times when problems occur.

Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health

Periodic trapping to remove or eliminate nuisance wildlife is not expected to adversely affect wildlife populations that occur on the Refuge and likely assists in maintaining the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge.

Other Uses and Public Safety

Trapping is not expected to adversely affect other Refuge uses or public safety.

Cumulative Impacts:

There are no anticipated cumulative impacts.

Public Review and Comment:

This compatibility determination was part of the Swan Lake NWR Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment. Public notification and review included a notice of availability published in the Federal Register, a 30-day comment period, local media announcements, and a public meeting near the Refuge. Comments received and agency responses are included in the final version of the Swan Lake NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

Determination:

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

1. Trapping will be conducted in accordance with an approved Trapping Plan.
2. Trapping will be conducted under permit by experienced trappers.

Justification:

In view of the above and with the stipulations previously described, trapping will not materially interfere with or detract from the NWRS mission or purposes of the Refuge. Trapping is a tool used to control nuisance wildlife and help fulfill Refuge management objectives. Its use is regulated and at the discretion of the Refuge Manager. It is not expected to adversely affect wildlife populations or their habitats, or conflict with other Refuge uses.

Refuge Manager: Steve Whitson 2-3-11
(Signature and Date)

Concurrence:

Regional Chief: Rick Schultz 2/15/11
(Signature and Date)

Mandatory 10-Year Re-Evaluation Date: 2021

References

- DeLong, A. K. 2002. Managing visitor use and disturbance of waterbirds — a literature review of impacts and mitigation measures — prepared for Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge. Appendix L (114 pp.) in Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Complex final environmental impact statement for the comprehensive conservation plan and boundary revision (Vol. II). Dept. of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1, Portland, OR. Available URL: <http://www.fws.gov/stillwater/litreview.pdf>
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1992. Population Management at Field Stations: General. 701 FW 1. Department of Interior. Available URL: <http://www.fws.gov/policy/701fw1.html>
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2001. Biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health. 601 FW 3. National Wildlife Refuge System, Department of Interior. Available URL: <http://policy.fws.gov/601fw3.html>