

## COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

**Use:** Wildlife Observation and Photography (including the means of access such as hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing)

**Refuge Name:** Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

**Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:** The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Establishment Act, HR 1230 (P.L. 107-91), and the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge Complex Expansion and Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Expansion Act, HR 289 (P.L. 108-23).

**Refuge Purpose(s):** The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge was established by an Act of Congress, which became Public Law 107-91 on December 21, 2001. Section 4 of the Act states the following purposes for the new Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge:

- To protect the remaining high-quality fish and wildlife habitats of the Detroit River before they are lost to further development and to restore and enhance degraded wildlife habitats associated with the Detroit River.
- To assist in international efforts to conserve, enhance, and restore the native aquatic and terrestrial community characteristics of the Detroit River (including associated fish, wildlife, and plant species) both in the United States and Canada.
- To facilitate partnerships among the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Canadian national and provincial authorities, State and local governments, local communities in the United States and in Canada, conservation organizations, and other non-Federal entities to promote public awareness of the resources of the Detroit River.

**National Wildlife Refuge System Mission:** “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:**

*What is the use?* Wildlife Observation and Photography (including the means of access such as hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing)

General public access to observe and/or photograph wildlife and Refuge habitats including the means of access such as hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Under the National Wildlife Refuge Improvement Act, of 1997, wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses.

*Where is the use conducted?* Currently, wildlife observation and photography occur throughout the Detroit River area, both on and off the river. Other agencies throughout the Detroit River area do provide opportunities for visitors to use trails, observation decks, boat launches, and other items necessary for them to observe and photograph wildlife and their habitat.

*When is the use conducted?* The uses occur throughout the year.

*How is the use conducted?* All wildlife observation and photography activities including the means to access such as snowshoe, cross-country skiing and hiking will be conducted with the refuge's primary objectives, habitat management requirements, and goals as the guiding principles. Activities done under these restrictions allow the refuge to accomplish its management goals and provide for the safety of visitors.

*Why is this use being proposed?* Permitting this activity would be consistent with the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, and help accomplish refuge goals and promote understanding, appreciation, and support for its mission.

**Availability of Resources:** Staff is available to maintain these facilities, enforce Refuge regulations, and provide information to the public. Administering this use can thus be done with existing resources for ongoing operations, maintenance and public information.

**Anticipated Impacts of the Use:** Wildlife observation and photography (including means of transportation-hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing) have shown no measurable environmental impacts to the refuge, its habitats, or wildlife species. Concerns primarily center on the possibility of impacting threatened and other sensitive non-target species through excessive disturbance. Disturbance to wildlife is limited to occasional disturbance such as flushing wildlife (waterfowl). Restrictions on locations for trails and associated facilities will assure minimal impacts on aesthetics on the river and disturbance to wildlife and other public use activities. The activities follow all applicable laws, regulations and policies; including Migratory Bird Conservation Act, Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations, National Wildlife Refuge System Manual, National Wildlife Refuge System goals and objectives, and Detroit River IWR goals and objectives. These activities are compliant with the purpose of the refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System Mission. Operating this activity does not alter the refuge's ability to meet habitat goals and it helps support several of the primary objectives of the refuge.

Wildlife observation and photography are priority public uses listed in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. By facilitating these uses on the refuge, we will increase visitors' knowledge and appreciation of fish and wildlife, which will lead to increased public stewardship of fish and wildlife and their habitats on the refuge and in general. Increased public stewardship will support and complement the Service's actions in achieving the refuge's purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

**Public Review and Comment:** The Compatibility Determination will go out to public comment for 30 days.

**Public Review and Comment:**

Comments can be sent to:

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge  
Attn: Jody DeMeyere  
9311 Groh Road  
Grosse Ile, MI 48138

**E-mail:**

detroitriver@fws.gov

**Phone:**

734-692-7649

**Determination** (Check one below):

Use is Not Compatible

Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

**Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:** To ensure compatibility with National Wildlife Refuge System and Detroit River IWR goals and objectives, wildlife observation and photography can only occur under the following stipulations:

1. Wildlife observation and photography will only occur in developed areas designated by the CCP or step-down plan or under the guidance of a Refuge staff member, volunteer or trained teacher to assure minimal disturbance to wildlife, minimal vegetation damage, and minimal user conflict between other public uses.

**Justification:**

Wildlife observation and photography (including the means of access such as hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing) are compatible uses at Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. This determination was made as part of the environmental assessment associated with the comprehensive conservation planning process.

Signature: Refuge Manager: \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature and date)

Concurrence: Refuge Chief: \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature and date)

**Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-evaluation Date: 2026**