



ARTHUR CARHART NATIONAL WILDERNESS TRAINING CENTER

# MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS DECISION GUIDE

## WORKSHEETS

*"... except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act..."*

– the Wilderness Act, 1964

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Please refer to the accompanying MRDG Instructions for filling out this guide.  
The spaces in the worksheets will expand as necessary as you enter your response.

The MRDG Instructions may be found at: <http://www.wilderness.net/mrdg/>

Project Title: **Predator Management for the  
Threatened Piping Plover at Holgate and Little  
Beach Island at E.B. Forsythe NWR.**

**Step 1:** Determine if any administrative action is necessary.

<b>Description:</b> Briefly describe the situation that may prompt action.
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Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge wilderness areas were originally identified as such because they were never physically modified by humans. The result of this action provides exceptional nesting habitats of the federally listed piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*), particularly at Holgate and Little Beach Island. As a critical area for nesting piping plovers, impacts from predatory animals such as fox, mink, raccoons, opossum, and various gull species, can have a devastating effect on nesting piping plover populations as well as other beach nesting shorebirds.

Because this is a management action that will be conducted within the wilderness area, there are no alternatives for this type of work outside of the wilderness area

To determine if administrative action is necessary, answer the questions listed in A - F on the following pages by answering Yes, No, or Not Applicable and providing and explanation.

**A. Describe Options Outside of Wilderness**

Is action necessary within wilderness?

Yes: ☒ No: ☐

**Explain:** This option is not practically feasible. The actions of the predators occur on the same wilderness areas where the piping plovers nest. Predator management taken outside of the wilderness areas will have no impacts to the predators that are currently present on the wilderness area. Predator management outside of the wilderness area may reduce the emigration of predators into the wilderness area, but it does not address the predators that are currently present.

**B. Describe Valid Existing Rights or Special Provisions of Wilderness Legislation**

Is action necessary to satisfy valid existing rights or a special provision in wilderness legislation (the Wilderness Act of 1964 or subsequent wilderness laws) that allows or requires consideration of the Section 4(c) prohibited uses? Cite law and section.

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

**Explain:** Public Law 88-577 – The Wilderness Act of 1964 (4)(d)(2): Nothing in this Act shall prevent within national forest wilderness areas any activity, including prospecting, for the purpose of gathering information about mineral or other resources, if such activity is carried on in a manner compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment.

**Explain:** Section (4)(d)(2) recognizes the purpose of gathering information from other resources on wilderness areas. The process of predator management is a means of gathering information/data on the impacts that predators have on nesting piping plovers and beach nesting birds. Section 4(d)(2) of the Wilderness Act allows the refuge to conduct such management actions.

**C. Describe Requirements of Other Legislation**

Is action necessary to meet the requirements of other laws?

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

**Explain:** Piping plovers are managed as a part of a recovery plan developed under the auspices of the Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C § 1531 et seq.). The refuge manages predators to meet the goals of the recovery plan and recovery of this listed species.

#### D. Describe Other Guidance

Is action necessary to conform to direction contained in agency policy, unit and wilderness management plans, species recovery plans, or agreements with tribal, state and local governments or other federal agencies?

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

**Explain:** The refuge does not currently have an approved Wilderness Management plan. The refuge does have a completed and approved Wilderness Character Monitoring Plan. No additional guidance is required for trapping on wilderness areas. A compatibility determination for refuge trapping has been written and approved in 2004. As noted in C., action is necessary to meet goals of a species recovery plan.

#### E. Wilderness Character

Is action necessary to preserve one or more of the qualities of wilderness character including: Untrammeled, Undeveloped, Natural, Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation, or other unique components that reflect the character of this wilderness area?

Untrammeled: Yes: ☐ No: ☒ Not Applicable: ☐

**Explain:** The installation of animal trapping equipment (snares, box traps, conibears, gas cartridges) will impact the untrammeled quality of the wilderness area, but will be limited to a predetermined location on the Holgate and Little Beach Island Wilderness. The action of installing the animal trapping equipment within the wilderness will temporally degrade the untrammeled quality by bringing a foreign element to the wilderness. The removal of animal predators for the protection of the piping plover and beach nesting birds would not be possible if this management action was not undertaken.

Undeveloped: Yes: ☐ No: ☒ Not Applicable: ☐

**Explain:** There are currently no developed areas within the wilderness. The installation of animal trapping equipment would temporally impair the "undeveloped" wilderness character, but this object is not a permanent fixture to the wilderness landscape and is only present for a short period of time.

Natural: Yes: ☐ No: ☒ Not Applicable: ☐

**Explain:** The installation of animal trapping equipment is not a natural action of this wilderness character.

**Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation:**

Yes: ☐ No: ☒ Not Applicable: ☐

**Explain:** Solitude, primitive and unconfined experiences will not be impacted at the Holgate or Little Beach Island Wilderness.

Other unique components that reflect the character of this wilderness:

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: Trapping will preserve the natural state for all beach-nesting birds. The predator rate is much higher than it was historically due to the development to the north of Holgate Wilderness.

#### F. Describe Effects to the Public Purposes of Wilderness

Is action necessary to be consistent with one or more of the public purposes for wilderness (as stated in Section 4(b) of the Wilderness Act) of recreation, scenic, scientific, education, conservation, and historical use?

Recreation: Yes: ☐ No: ☒ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: The installation of animal trapping equipment is not necessary for recreation on the Holgate or Little Beach Island wilderness.

Scenic: Yes: ☐ No: ☒ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: Overall scenic quality and value is not dependent on the installation animal trapping equipment.

Scientific: Yes: ☒ No: ☐ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: Information gathered from collected animal specimens is critical to determine the productivity of nest and chick success for the piping plovers at the Holgate and Little Beach Island as well as the Atlantic Flyway piping plover population. This information would not be obtainable without the use of this management tool.

Education: Yes: ☐ No: ☒ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: Education about refuge wilderness can occur with/without the installation of animal trapping equipment.

Conservation: Yes: ☐ No: ☒ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: Generally, conservation practices will not be affected by the installation of the animal trapping equipment.

Historical use: Yes: ☐ No: ☒ Not Applicable: ☐

Explain: Instillation of animal trapping equipment will not promote or demote the historical value of the wilderness areas.

**Step 1 Decision: Is any administrative action necessary in wilderness?**

Yes: ☒ No: ☐ More information needed: ☐

**Explain:** An administrative action is necessary if animal trapping equipment is to occur on the Holgate and Little Beach Island Wilderness. The refuge currently allows scientific collection and research on wilderness areas. In order to comply with the the Wilderness Act of 1964 (4)(d)(2), a Minimum Required Decision Guide (MRDG) needs to be approved before the installation of animal trapping equipment can occur on wilderness areas.

If action is necessary, proceed to Step 2 to determine the minimum activity.

**Step 2: Determine the minimum activity.**

**Please refer to the accompanying MRDG Instructions for information on identifying alternatives and an explanation of the effects criteria displayed below.**

**Description of Alternatives**

For each alternative, describe what methods and techniques will be used, when the activity will take place, where the activity will take place, what mitigation measures are necessary, and the general effects to the wilderness resource and character.

**Alternative A: Permit the use of animal trapping devices on the Holgate and Little Beach Island Wilderness Areas.**

**Description:** Conserve Wildlife Foundation (CWF) and the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Wildlife Services (USDA/APHIS) will strategically place trapping devices to capture predatory animals. The devices used include, but are not limited to, snares, havahart box traps, conibear traps, and gas cartridges. All trapping equipment is manually operated. No mechanical device will be used to trap predatory animals. All trapping will abide by NJ law.

**Effects:**

**Wilderness Character**

**Untrammelled:** Trapping activities will have minimal impacts on the untrammelled quality of the wilderness area. Traps will be strategically placed in locations where predator activity is being observed. Once deployed, access to check and monitor trapping equipment will be done by using one ingress and egress from the trapping equipment. The surrounding wilderness areas will not be affected by this action. Minimal effects to the untrammelled quality would include the process of installing the trapping equipment and the monitoring/maintenance of it.

**Undeveloped:** Installing animal trapping devices, though for only a short period of time, will diminish the undeveloped quality of the Holgate and Little Beach Island wilderness. Because the trapping equipment being used is small in size and will not be a permanent fixture to the land scape, the diminishing of the undeveloped quality will be minimal. There are no manmade structures on the Holgate or Little Beach Island wilderness.

**Natural:** Installing the animal trapping devices will have minimal effects on the natural quality of the wilderness. The physical presence of the animal trapping devices will diminish the natural quality of the wilderness. Because the devices are small in size and not easily visible to the untrained eye, the diminished quality of the natural character would be minimal. This diminished quality will only occur from March through August.

**Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation:** Minimal effects for reduction of this quality since Holgate and Little Beach Island wilderness is closed to all public access during the piping plover breeding season. However, during the month of March at the Holgate wilderness, animal trapping devices may be deployed and this will have a minimal effect on solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation. Animal trapping equipment will be in locations in which public access is not allowed. No animal trapping equipment will be present on the Holgate and Little Beach Island wilderness areas between September and February.

**Other unique components that reflect the character of this wilderness:** Continued traditional wildlife uses such as fishing and wildlife observation on the Holgate wilderness area when open to the public from September 1 – March 31. Little Beach Island wilderness is closed to all public access year round. Public access to Little Beach Island is only permitted through the issuance of an approved Special Use Permit (SUP).

**Heritage and Cultural Resources:** Continued traditional wildlife uses such as fishing and wildlife observation on the Holgate wilderness area when open to the public from September 1 – March 31. Public access to Little Beach Island is only permitted through the issuance of an approved Special Use Permit (SUP).

**Maintaining Traditional Skills:** Traditional skills will be maintained after the seasonal completion of piping plover observations and the Holgate wilderness area is open to the public. These skills include fishing, crabbing, clamming, and wildlife observation and photography. Other historic consumptive uses such as hunting is not permitted on the Holgate wilderness. Little Beach Island wilderness is closed to all public access year round. Public access to Little Beach Island is only permitted through the issuance of an approved Special Use Permit (SUP).

**Special Provisions:** No special provisions at this time.

**Economics and Timing Constraints:** Animal trapping activities only occur from March 1 through August 31 at the Holgate Wilderness and April 1 through August 31 at the Little Beach Island Wilderness. There are no economic impacts resulting from the action.

**Additional Wilderness-specific Comparison Criteria:** No comparison criteria at this time.

**Safety of Visitors, Personnel, and Contractors:** Visitor safety should not be compromised since animal trapping actions occur in areas where the public is not permitted. Technician(s) may face these likely hazards when collecting data:

- 1: Uneven ground, muddy/wet ground conditions, slip, trips, falls, injuries due to fatigue, strains and sprains.
- 2: Dehydration, fatigue, heat stroke.
- 3: Sunburn-UV ray exposure.
- 4: Insect borne diseases.

## Alternative B: No Action.

**Description:** No animal trapping equipment will be installed or trapping activities/monitoring will occur on the Holgate or Little Beach Island Units.

### **Effects:**

#### **Wilderness Character**

**Untrammeled:** Untrammeled quality of wilderness will remain at its current state.

**Undeveloped:** Undeveloped quality of wilderness will remain at its current state.

**Natural:** Natural quality of wilderness will remain at its current state.

**Outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation:**  
Opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation will remain at its current state.

**Other unique components that reflect the character of this wilderness**

**Heritage and Cultural Resources:** Continued traditional wildlife uses such as fishing and wildlife observation on the Holgate wilderness areas when open to the public. Little Beach Island heritage and cultural uses will continue to be permitted only through the issuance of an approved Special Use Permit.

**Maintaining Traditional Skills:** Traditional skills will be maintained after the Holgate wilderness is open to the public. These skills include fishing, crabbing, clamming, and wildlife observation and photography. Other historic consumptive uses such as waterfowl hunting is not permitted on Holgate wilderness. Hunting is permitted within the wilderness marsh areas west of Little Beach Island.

**Special Provisions:** No special provisions at this time.

**Economics and Timing Constraints:** Economic impacts will not affect the Holgate or Little Beach Island wilderness.

**Additional Wilderness-specific Comparison Criteria:** No comparison criteria at this time.

**Safety of Visitors, Personnel, and Contractors:** No safety impacts to visitors or technicians.

### **Comparison of Alternatives**

It may be useful to compare each alternative's benefits and adverse effects to each of the criteria in tabular form, keeping in mind the law's mandate to "preserve wilderness character."

	Alternative A	No Action		
Untrammelled	-	+		
Undeveloped	-	+		
Natural	+	+		
Solitude or Primitive Recreation	+	+		
Unique components	+	+		
<b>WILDERNESS CHARACTER</b>	--/+++	/+++++		

	Alternative A	No Action		
Heritage & Cultural Resources	+	+		
Maintaining Traditional Skills	+	+		
Special Provisions	+	+		
Economics & Timing	+	+		
Additional Wilderness Criteria	+	+		
<b>OTHER CRITERIA SUMMARY</b>	/+++++	/+++++		

	Alternative A	No Action		
<b>SAFETY (PUBLIC AND WORKERS)</b>	-	+		

## Safety Criterion

Alternative A: This alternative would increase the likelihood of technicians being injured while monitoring and maintaining the animal trapping devices. The use of hand tools for the instillation of the animal trapping devices poses injury risks that include cuts, blisters, strains, sprains, and overexertion. As with Alternative A, technicians are exposed to extreme climatic conditions for longer periods of time under this alternative. Injuries under this element include heat exhaustion/stroke, lightning strikes, and UV overexposure. Wildlife hazardous conditions include biting and clawing from the trapped animals, with some animal species being vectors for the transmittal of diseases. Stinging and biting insects are also present with some species being a possible vector for the transmittal of diseases.

Alternative B: This alternative will not have any effects on the technician(s).

## Documentation:

For Alternative A, there is no documentation or records of injuries as a result of installing or monitoring animal trapping equipment.



## Step 2 Decision: What is the Minimum Activity?

Please refer to the accompanying MRDG Instructions before describing the selected alternative and describing the rationale for selection.

**Selected alternative: Alternative A**

**Rationale for selecting this alternative (including safety criterion, if appropriate):**

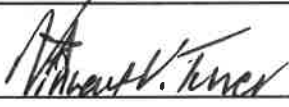

Predators have a detrimental effect on beach nesting birds. Nests are lost as a result of consumption or constant predator disturbance which will cause the nesting birds to abandon the nests. These losses result in lower productivity numbers which in turn has the potential of reducing the overall population of the bird species, especially the piping plover. The removal of these predators by using the animal trapping devices will reduce the likelihood of nest being lost to predators. Alternatives B (No Action) would not reduce this predator threat and it would be highly likely that predator activity would increase if Alternative A were not implemented.

**Monitoring and reporting requirements:** USDA/APHIS will provide reports at the completion of each trapping session. These reports will include the number of animal trapping devices used, the location where the devices were used, and the number of predators removed.

**Check any Wilderness Act Section 4(c) uses approved in this alternative:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> mechanical transport | <input type="checkbox"/> landing of aircraft                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> motorized equipment  | <input type="checkbox"/> temporary road                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> motor vehicles       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure or installation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> motorboats           |   |

Record and report any authorizations of Wilderness Act Section 4(c) uses according to agency procedures.

Approvals	Signature	Name	Position	Date
Prepared by:		Vincent V. Turner	Wildlife Biologist	8/2/18
Recommended:				
Recommended:				
Approved:		VIRGINIA Rende	Refuge MGR	8-9-18

