U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge
Hunting and Fishing Plan
2021

Ducks in managed wetland on Bald Knob NWR - Jim Daniel

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge
Hunting and Fishing Plan

August 2021

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge
1439 Coal Chute Road
Bald Knob, AR 72010

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SECTION A

BALD KNOB NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
MIGRATORY BIRDS, UPLAND, AND BIG GAME HUNTING AND FISHING PLAN

I. Introduction

National Wildlife Refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), the purposes of an individual refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS, Service) policy, and laws and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (Administration Act or NWRSAA), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Improvement Act or NWRSIA), Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual.

The Central Arkansas National Wildlife Refuge Complex includes six individual and unique National Wildlife Refuges (NWR, refuge). These are Bald Knob NWR, Big Lake NWR, Cache River NWR, Holla Bend NWR, Logan Cave NWR, and Wapanocca NWR. With the exception of Logan Cave NWR, hunting and fishing are approved and existing uses on each of these refuges (USFWS 2009, 2010).

Bald Knob NWR was established September 22, 1993 pursuant to the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986 (16 U.S.C. § 390l(b), Stat. 3583), the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. § 742f(b) (l)) and the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1934 (16 U.S.C. § 715d) .

The primary purposes of the refuge are "... the conservation of the wetlands of the Nation in order to maintain the public benefits they provide and to help fulfill international obligations contained in various migratory bird treaties and conventions ..." 16 U.S.C. § 3901(b), 100 Stat. 3583 (Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986); "...for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources..." 16 U.S.C. § 742f(a)(4) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956); "…for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude... "16 U.S.C. § 742f(b)(l) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956); "... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds." 16 U.S.C. § 751d (Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1934).

Bald Knob NWR was established to protect and provide feeding and resting areas for migrating waterfowl. Acquired as part of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), this refuge provides winter habitat for large concentrations of ducks and geese.

Located south of the town of Bald Knob in White County, Arkansas, Bald Knob NWR encompasses approximately 15,340 acres. Bald Knob NWR contains a mixture of baldcypress-tupelo brakes, oxbow lakes, bottomland hardwoods, reforested lands, moist-soil impoundments, and agricultural fields. The refuge is bounded on its southern and eastern borders by the Little Red River and characterized by Overflow Creek, which winds through the middle. The habitats contained within the boundaries of Bald Knob NWR consist of approximately 4,400 acres of farmland, 6,600 acres of afforestation, 4,000 acres of bottomland hardwood forests and several hundred acres of sloughs, irrigation canals, drainage ditches and other water features.

Situated at the edge of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley and the foothills of the Ozark Mountains and adjacent to the Henry Gray Hurricane Lake State Wildlife Management Area, this refuge is an important link in protecting wildlife and its habitat.

The Refuge is comprised of four units: Bison Unit (3,545 ac.) Core Waterfowl Area (2,173 ac.) Mingo Creek Unit (1,933 ac.) and Waterfowl Sanctuary (7,785 ac.) for a total acreage 15,436 acres (Figure 1). Following the acquisition in 1993, afforestation efforts began on significant portions of the croplands and to date over 6,600 acres have been restored. These efforts have resulted in forest stands of various ages with the oldest stands now exceeding 25 years old. The remaining croplands total approximately 4,400 acres. Most of this habitat is managed each year through a cooperative farming agreement to provide supplemental food and cover for the hundreds of thousands of waterfowl that overwinter and migrate through the refuge each year. These cropland acres are typically rotated on an annual basis between, rice, soybeans, moist soil and mud flat management for migrating shorebirds. Croplands exists across all units except the Mingo Creek Unit. The Mingo Creek Unit is comprised of mature bottomland hardwoods and derives its name from the Mingo Creek that flows through it to the Little Red River.

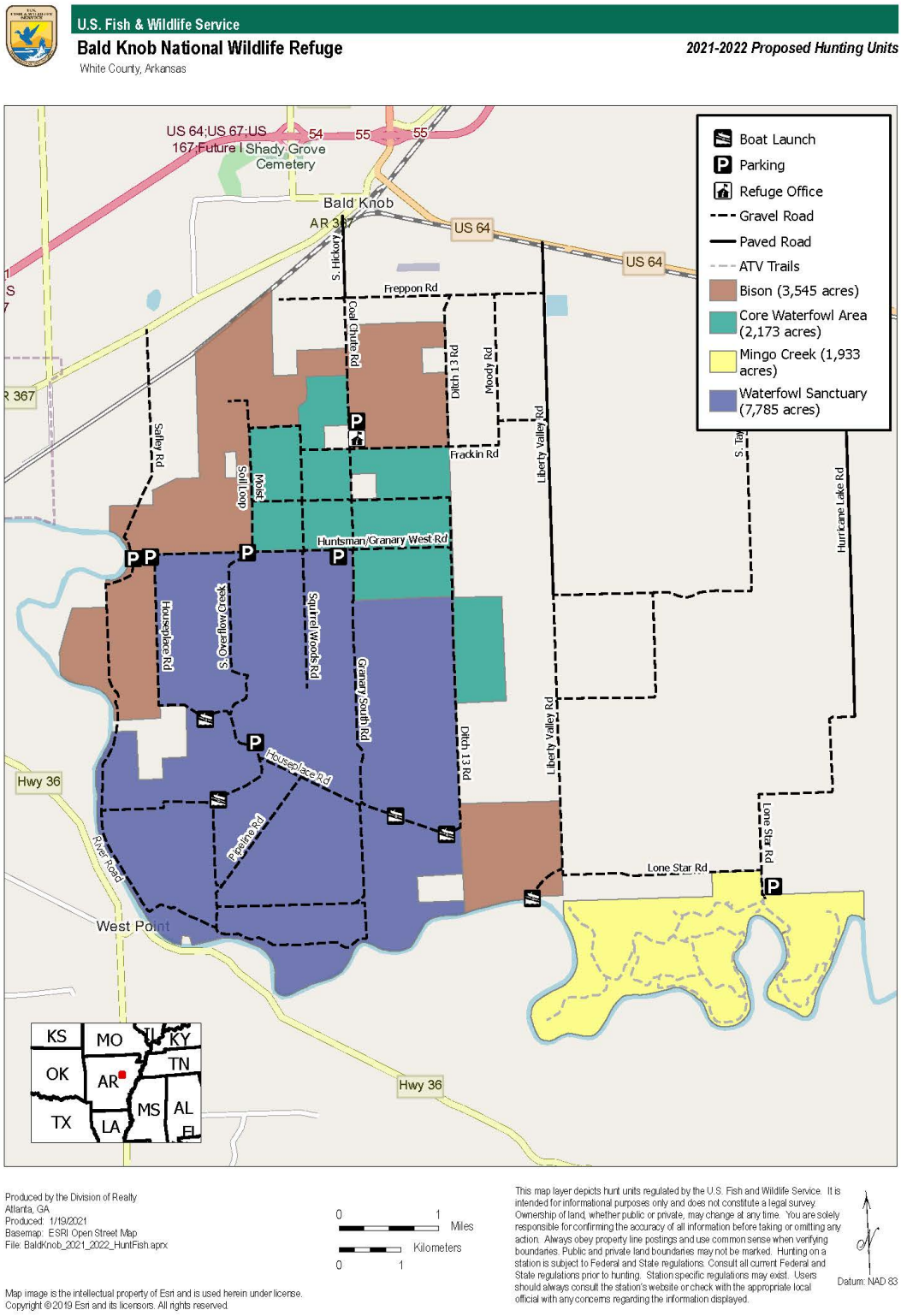
The mission of the NWRS, as outlined by the NWRSAA, as amended by the NWRSIA (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), is to:

"... 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."

The NWRSAA (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4) mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the NWRS to:

- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the NWRS;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the NWRS are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the NWRS described at 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;
- Ensure effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the States in which the units of the NWRS are located;
- Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of each refuge;

Figure 1. Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge Hunt Units.



- Recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the NWRS through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- Ensure that opportunities are provided within the NWRS for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and
- Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

Therefore, it is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities, including hunting and fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established and the mission of the NWRS. Hunting and fishing are consistent with this Act and the larger goals to develop compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation programs that lead to enjoyable experiences; a greater understanding of fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation; and a greater appreciation for the value of Bald Knob NWR.

Beginning with its establishment in 1993, Bald Knob NWR has been open to hunting and fishing. The refuge is currently open to hunting for migratory game birds including waterfowl, upland game, and big game (white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus*) in designated areas during specific times (USFWS 1995). Hunting, sport fishing and frogging are currently permitted year-round in accordance with state regulations; however, the Refuge is closed at night to all activities except raccoon and opossum hunt (USFWS 1995 and 1996). Anglers find good sport fishing on the refuge; the principal game fish are catfish, crappie, bass and bream (USFWS 1996).

The Service recognizes that the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) is the authority in the state of Arkansas regarding the population status and sustainability of resident wildlife, including the species that are hunted on Bald Knob NWR. The Service strives to provide hunting and fishing opportunities at Bald Knob NWR that are within the State and Federal season frameworks.

Public hunting and fishing are existing uses on the refuge, which were previously approved with the refuge's hunt plan, fish plan, and Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) (USFWS 1995, 1996, and 2009). This Hunting and Fishing Plan for the refuge was developed based on Alternative B (Proposed Action) in the Environmental Assessment (EA) in Section B. The companion Hunting and Fishing Compatibility Determinations (CDs) are included in Appendix B and C. Upon approval, these documents will replace the existing Hunt and Fish Plans and existing Hunting and Fishing CDs.

II. Statement of Objectives

Hunting and fishing are consistent with the NWRSIA and the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (USFWS 2009) goals and objectives to develop compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation programs that lead to enjoyable experiences; a greater understanding of fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation; and a greater appreciation for the value of Bald Knob NWR.

The Bald Knob NWR CCP goals and objectives of the hunting and fishing program are (USFWS 2009):

Bald Knob NWR Goal 4: *Develop compatible, wildlife-dependent recreational programs that lead to enjoyable experiences, a greater understanding of fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation, and a greater appreciation for the value of Bald Knob NWR.*

> ***Bald Knob NWR Objective 4-3.*** *Hunting. Annually provide and expand quality, compatible hunting opportunities as feasible.*
>
> ***Bald Knob NWR Objective 4-4:*** *Fishing. Annually provide and expand quality, compatible fishing opportunities as feasible.*

III. Description of Hunting and Fishing Program

Migratory bird hunting seasons and species (including waterfowl) will be consistent with Federal and state season frameworks and regulations. All other species open for take on the refuge are allowable for take under state regulations. Specific hunting and fishing seasons, days, and times may vary in some instances from state frameworks, however, these differences are approved by AGFC. The Bald Knob NWR hunt and fish public use brochures will be annually updated to reflect more specific information and restrictions, including seasons, days, times, bag limits, access, licenses and permits, allowable hunting and fishing devices and ammunition, other equipment, quota application process, and other refuge-specific regulations

A. Areas to be Open to Hunting and Fishing

Hunting:

The entire Refuge is open to hunting, except when/where certain areas are closed seasonally for various reasons (See Table 1).

Table 1. Bald Knob NWR Hunt Units and Acreage.

Hunt Unit	Acreage
Bison	3,545
Core Waterfowl Area	2,173
Mingo Creek	1,933
Waterfowl Sanctuary	7,785
Total Hunt Unit Acreage	**15,436**

Hunting of all proposed species would occur across all units. However, certain restrictions would apply during certain times of the year and under certain circumstances as follows. The Hunt Unit referred to as the “Waterfowl Sanctuary” consisting of 7,785 acres is closed to all public access between the period November 15th and February 28th. The purpose of this area of the refuge is to primarily serve as inviolate sanctuary for migratory waterfowl and is managed as such. From November 15th through February 28th the area referred to as the “Core Waterfowl Area,” which consists of 2,173 acres is closed to all public access between the hours of 1:00 pm and 4:00 am. Bald Knob NWR hosts an annual “Quota Gun Deer Hunt” that typically coincides with the opening weekend of the State gun deer season. During this hunt, only Quota Gun Deer

Hunt permit (FWS Form 3–2439) holders are allowed to enter or use the Refuge and only for the purpose of deer hunting or incidental take of certain other species (See Figure 1). Additionally, unless there is a compelling reason to not open a particular area for hunting and fishing, future land acquisitions to Bald Knob NWR would be open to the public for these activities.

Fishing:
Fishing is allowed on all refuge waters across all units and in accordance with state regulations. Frogging is permitted during daylight hours (4:00 a.m. until one hour after legal sunset) within the state season and following AGFC regulations. Crawfish may be collected for personal use only. Bow fishing is also allowed on refuge waters. The "Waterfowl Sanctuary Hunt Unit," consists of 7,785 acres, is closed to all public access, including fishing, between the period November 15th and February 28th. Also, during this time period, the "Core Waterfowl Area Hunt Unit," consisting of 2,173 acres, is closed to all access between the hours of 1:00 pm and 4:00 am. Additionally, during the Quota Gun Deer and Quota Youth Gun Spring Turkey Hunts, refuge access is limited to quota hunt permit holders only.

B. Species to be Taken, and Hunting and Fishing Periods and Access

Any changes will be identified in the annual refuge public use brochure.

Waterfowl – Ducks, Coots, and Geese allowable for take under Federal and state regulations may be hunted during all state waterfowl seasons until 12:00 noon. All-day hunting allowed for geese (applicable species) during the State Conservation Order. All waterfowl hunting will be in accordance with Federal, state, and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Hunting Guidebook and annual refuge public use brochure.

Dove (*Zenaida macroura, Z. asiatica, Streptopelia decaocto*, *Columba livia*) follows the state-wide season in accordance with Federal, state, and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Hunting Guidebook and annual refuge public use brochure.

Woodcock (*Scolopax minor*) **-** follows the statewide season in accordance with Federal, state, and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Hunting Guidebook and annual refuge public use brochure.

Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) - follows the statewide season in accordance with Federal, state, and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Hunting Guidebook and annual refuge public use brochure.

Crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos, C. ossifragus*) - follows the statewide season in accordance with Federal, state, and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Hunting Guidebook and annual refuge public use brochure.

Rail (*Porzana carolina, Rallus limicola)***, Gallinule** (*Gallinula chloropus, Porphyrula martinica*) - follows the state-wide season in accordance with Federal, state, and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Hunting Guidebook and annual refuge public use brochure.

Rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus, S. aquaticus)* - follows the statewide season in accordance with state and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Hunting Guidebook and annual refuge public use brochure. Dogs are permitted.

Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis, S. niger)*- hunting is allowed September 1st through February 29th. Dogs are permitted.

Quail (*Colinus virginianus)* - follows the statewide season in accordance with state and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Hunting Guidebook and annual refuge public use brochure.

Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*) - hunting is allowed from September 1st - March 31st. Nighttime hunting for raccoon is allowed with the appropriate equipment and required license. Dogs are required when hunting at night.

Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*) - hunting is allowed according to state season. Nighttime hunting for opossum is allowed with the appropriate equipment and required license. Dogs are required when hunting at night.

Furbearer (coyote (*Canis latrans*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), nutria (*Myocastor coypus*), gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes)*, mink (*Mustela vison)*, muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus)*, striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis)*, bobcat (*Felis rufus)*, and river otter (*Lutra canadensis)*)- open for incidental take with devices legal for refuge hunts that occur from September 1st to March 31st, and according to any applicable state seasons and regulations.

Feral hogs (*Sus scrofa)* **-** open for incidental take only during the modern gun and muzzleloader deer seasons with hunting devices legal for those hunts and by archery hunters from November 1st - December 31st unless AGFC prescribes adjustments to these stipulations or seasons in their statewide feral hog control program.

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus)* – Archery hunting follows the state-wide season in accordance with state and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Hunting Guidebook and annual refuge public use brochure.

The modern gun quota deer hunt requires a quota permit (FWS Form 3–2439). During this hunt, the refuge is closed to all other public entry and use.

The modern gun youth deer hunt occurs during the first statewide youth hunt weekend. The refuge is open to all other activities during this hunt.

The Refuge allows participation in the statewide muzzleloader season typically occurring in mid-October each year; no quota permit is required.

Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo)*- Youth Quota Spring Turkey hunts require a quota permit (FWS Form 3–2439) and will follow the state-wide seasons listed in the AGFC Turkey Hunting Guidebook. Other Spring Turkey Hunting will not be conducted until a sustainable population is maintained and both refuge and state managers approve to open the hunt.

Note: of the above-listed species, white-winged, Eurasian collared, and rock dove; Virginia and sora rail; purple and common gallinule; American and fish crow; red and gray fox; bobcat, river otter, mink, and striped skunk, are species that would be newly opened for take under this hunting and fishing plan.

Hunting Access: Hunters may access the refuge no earlier than 4:00 a.m. and must leave one hour after legal sunset, except raccoon/opossum hunters. Waterfowl hunting ends at noon except during the State Conservation Order goose season. Hunters trailing or retrieving deer after hours should call the Refuge Office and leave a message stating their name, phone number and the general area in which they are searching for or retrieving

deer.

Sport Fishing: Fishing (including bowfishing), frogging, and crawfishing are allowed on all refuge waters in accordance with state and refuge regulations listed in the AGFC Fishing Guidebook and subject to seasonal area closures. All species allowable for take under state regulations are also open for take on the refuge. Popular fishes sought by anglers include various species of catfish, crappie, bream, and bass. Crawfish (*Procambarus spp.*) may be collected for personal use only.

Fishing Access: Anglers may access the refuge no earlier than 4:00 a.m. and must leave one hour after legal sunset.

C. Hunter and Angler Permit Requirements

A Refuge hunting permit is required for all hunting activities. The refuge general hunting permit must be signed by the hunter to be valid. It must be carried by the hunter at all times while on the refuge and in possession of hunting gear. Permits are non-transferable. A permit is located on the front of the refuge public use public use brochure or can be downloaded and printed from the refuge website. An electronic signed copy of the permit may also be produced on a person's own cellular phone or other type of portable electronic device that clearly displays and accurately reproduces all of the information. This permit expires June 30. Signing the permit acknowledges that the hunter has read and understands the refuge hunting regulations and agrees to obey them and agrees to allow USFWS and AGFC officers to inspect or search all equipment used during the permittee's hunt. NOTE: An additional permit is required for refuge deer and turkey quota hunts and must be signed and carried on your person while hunting. Quota Gun Deer Hunt permits (FWS Form 3–2439) currently are $12.50 each and must be purchased from the refuge website at www.fws.gov/refuge/baldknob beginning August 1. Youth quota turkey permits (FWS Form 3–2439) are free, and currently are available beginning March 1. Prices and dates of availability are subject to change at the refuge's discretion. Permits are non-transferable and nonrefundable, even in the event of refuge hunt closure due to flooding or government shutdowns.

Anglers are required to have a State fishing license, but a Refuge-Specific permit currently is not required.

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

When developing regulations for Bald Knob NWR, refuge staff reviewed the operations and regulations for neighboring State wildlife management areas and other refuges to find consistency where possible. Biennially, plans for the upcoming hunting seasons are presented to the AGFC at the Hunt Coordination Meeting for concurrence. The refuge follows state seasons, bag limits, and regulations, deviating only when necessary for biological, safety, staffing, or hunt quality reasons. The Service recognizes that AGFC is the authority in the state of Arkansas regarding the population status and sustainability of resident wildlife, including the species that are hunted on Bald Knob NWR. The Service strives to provide hunting opportunities at Bald Knob NWR that are within the State season framework.

The AGFC supports the refuge's Hunt Plan, as it will help meet State objectives. The Service recognizes that the State of Arkansas will have the lead on any disease that affects resident wildlife. Bald Knob NWR will support the State in its disease prevention and surveillance efforts

as appropriate. Federal Wildlife Officers and AGFC Wildlife Officers work together to respond to law enforcement needs on Bald Knob NWR, safeguarding hunters, visitors, and both game and nongame species.

E. Law Enforcement

Enforcement of refuge violations normally associated with management of a National Wildlife Refuge is the responsibility of commissioned Federal Wildlife Officers. Other officers, Special Agents, State Wildlife Officers, and the local Sheriff's Department often assist the Central Arkansas Refuge Complex Federal Wildlife Officers.

The following methods are used to control and enforce hunting regulations:

- Refuge and hunt area boundaries are clearly posted;
- The Refuge provides a brochure that shows open hunt areas, seasons and bag limits;
- Federal, State, and local law enforcement officers will randomly check hunters for compliance with Federal and State Laws.

F. Funding and Staffing Requirements

Annual administration costs for the hunting and fishing program at Bald Knob NWR, including salary, equipment, law enforcement, brochures, collection of data and analysis of biological information, etc. totals approximately $41,000 (Table 2.). It is anticipated that funding would continue to be prioritized to maintain the hunting and fishing program at Bald Knob NWR in the future.

Table 2. Approximate costs associated with administering hunting and fishing on Bald Knob NWR

Hunting and Fishing Program Needs	Cost
Staff (Maintenance Workers, Biologist, and Refuge Managers)	$13,500
Maintain roads, parking lots, trails*	$10,000
News releases, fact sheets, and reports	$500
Maintain signage	$1,000
Law Enforcement	$16,450
Total Annual Cost	**$41,450**
Offsetting Revenue for the Complex	$39,662

**Refuge trails and roads are maintained for a variety of activities. Costs shown are a percentage of total costs for trail/road maintenance on the refuge and are reflective of the percentage of trail/road use for hunting and fishing.*

IV. Conduct of the Hunting and Fishing Program

A. Hunter and Angler Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures

A free Refuge general hunting permit (signed brochure) is required for all hunting activities (Note: at some point in the future, rising administrative/operational costs to conduct hunting and fishing programs could necessitate charging an annual fee for hunting permits). Hunters have the option of a signed physical copy or a downloaded/electronic version to a smartphone or

similar device that can be presented upon request. Physical permits are non-transferable and must be signed by the hunter and carried at all times while on the refuge in possession of hunting gear. General hunting permits are located on the front of the current annual public use brochure (available at the multiple kiosks located on the refuge) or can be downloaded and printed from the refuge website at http://www.fws.gov/baldknob.

Additional permits (FWS Form 3–2439) are required for the annual Quota Gun Deer and annual Quota Youth Gun Spring Turkey hunts. Applications for the annual Quota Gun Deer hunt may be applied for and purchased via an online portal. A limited number of Quota Gun Deer hunt permits will be sold on a first come, first serve basis. Successful applicants must print out and sign the permit and display a portion of that permit on their vehicle while participating in the hunt. Hunters are required to be in possession of this permit while on the refuge or participating in the hunt. Currently, quota gun deer permits may be purchased for $12.50 from https://baldknob.recaccess.com/ beginning on August 1st until November 13th or until all permits are sold (Permit fee and dates of availability may change in the future at the discretion of the refuge). Presently the Refuge is allowing the sale of 250 permits; this number could be adjusted up or down in the future based on administrative need, hunter demand, hunt quality, etc. The entire Refuge including the Mingo Creek Unit is closed to all other entry and public use during the Quota Gun Deer Hunt. Only Quota Gun Deer Hunt permit holders are allowed to enter or use the Refuge during this hunt and only for the purpose of deer hunting or incidental take of listed species. All deer harvested during the two-day Quota Gun Deer Hunt must be checked at the Refuge Headquarters. In addition, all deer harvested on the refuge must be checked according to state regulations.

Youth hunters (ages 6 through 15) may obtain a free Quota Youth Gun Spring Turkey hunt permit (FWS Form 3-2439) online beginning March 1 until all permits are issued. Interested youths may obtain a permit from https://baldknob.recaccess.com/ Only one hunter may apply per form. Quota youth turkey hunting will be conducted during the statewide Youth Spring Turkey Hunt on the refuge's Bison, Waterfowl Sanctuary, and Mingo Creek Hunt Units. All or portions of the refuge may be closed to other public entry and use during the youth turkey hunt. Successful applicants may be assigned to hunt in a designated area to be determined by the Refuge Manager. Selected youth hunters must be under the direct supervision of an adult at least 18 years of age (or 21 years of age depending on the youth's hunter education status). All turkeys killed must be reported to the Refuge and checked according to State regulations.

Currently, anglers are not required to obtain a refuge-specific fishing permit, but they must have in their possession a valid AR fishing license. In the future, if administrative/operational circumstances dictate, a refuge fishing permit may be required.

Hunting blinds accessible by wheelchair-bound hunters may be provided in designated areas on the refuge for waterfowl and big game hunting. Blinds may be moveable or fixed, and their placement sites may vary depending on water/habitat conditions and use of areas by the target game species. Blinds/access paths will be of such construction and placement that will ensure compatibility, safety, minimal environmental footprint, and minimize conflicts with other users. A draw permit system would be used to assign hunters to these blinds. Permits would be free. Fishing platforms for wheelchair-bound anglers may be constructed in areas suitable for their placement in a manner that will ensure compatibility, safety, and minimize conflicts with other users.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

Specific hunting and fishing seasons, days, and times may vary in some instances from state frameworks, however, these differences are approved by AGFC. The Bald Knob NWR hunt and fish public use brochures will be annually updated to reflect more specific information and restrictions, including seasons, days, times, bag limits, access, licenses and permits, allowable hunting and fishing devices and ammunition, other equipment, quota application process, and other refuge-specific regulations. To ensure compatibility with refuge purposes and the mission of the Refuge System, hunting must be conducted in accordance with Federal and State season frameworks and regulations, as supplemented by refuge-specific regulations, and information sheets/brochures. Stipulations are detailed in the Hunting Compatibility Determination (CD) (Appendix B). The following hunting procedures apply at Bald Knob NWR.

(a) *Bald Knob National Wildlife Refuge*

(1) *Migratory game bird hunting*. We allow hunting of duck, goose, coot, merganser, snipe, woodcock, rail, gallinule, crow, and dove on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) We require a signed refuge hunting permit (FWS Form 3-2439). Anyone on the refuge in possession of hunting equipment must sign and possess the permit (FWS Form 3-2439) at all times.

(ii) During the quota gun deer hunt, we close the refuge to all other hunts and public entry, unless the refuge is closed to deer hunting at that time due to implementation of State flood closure zone regulations.

(iii) Hunters may enter the refuge beginning at 4 a.m. Except when hunting applicable goose species during the State Conservation Order, waterfowl hunters must exit the refuge by 1 p.m. All other hunters, including those hunting applicable goose species during the State Conservation Order, must exit the refuge no later than 1 hour after legal sunset.

(iv) We allow waterfowl hunting until 12 p.m. (noon), except that during the State Conservation Order, you may hunt for applicable goose species until legal sunset. Snipe, woodcock, rail, gallinule, crow, and dove hunters may hunt until legal sunset.

(v) When waterfowl hunting, you may not possess more than 25 shotgun shells while in the field, except that during the State Conservation Order, there is no limit on the number of shells you may possess while hunting applicable goose species.

(vi) We prohibit hunting closer than 100 yards (91 meters) to another hunter or hunting party.

(vii) You must remove decoys, blinds, boats, and all other equipment at the end of each day's hunt (see §27.93 of this chapter).

(viii) All hunters age 11 and younger who possess valid hunter education certification must remain within normal sight and voice contact with an adult age 18 or older who possesses a valid State hunting license. Hunters age 15 and younger who have not completed hunter education must be under the direct supervision (within arm's reach) of an adult age 21 or older who possesses a valid State hunting license. One adult may supervise up to two youth hunters for migratory bird and upland game hunting, but may supervise only one youth during big game hunting.

(ix) We allow incidental take of beaver, muskrat, nutria, river otter, mink, bobcat, fox, striped skunk, and coyote during any refuge hunt with the weapons legal for that hunt, subject to applicable State seasons and regulations.

(x) We allow the use of dogs when migratory game bird hunting.
(xi) We close the Waterfowl Sanctuary Hunt Unit to all entry and hunting from November 15 to February 28, except that quota gun deer hunters may hunt in that Unit when the season overlaps with these dates.
(xii) We allow waterfowl hunting from mowed and/or graveled road rights-of-way, but we prohibit all other hunting from these rights-of-way.
(xiii) We allow only hunters to use all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and only from September 1 through March 31, except that during the State Conservation Order, hunters may use ATVs for hunting applicable goose species.
(xiv) Hunters may use conventional motor vehicles, ATVs, bicycles, and e-bikes only on public use roads, levee tops, designated ATV trails (open to ATVs only), and established parking lots not closed by a locked gate, other barrier, or signage.
(xv) Hunters and anglers may use conventional motor vehicles only in the Bison, Waterfowl Sanctuary, and Core Waterfowl Area Hunt Units and only from March 1 through November 14.
(xvi) From November 15 through February 28, we close the Core Waterfowl Area Hunt Unit to all hunting, fishing, and public entry at 1 p.m. daily, except that during the State Conservation Order, you may hunt applicable goose species in this Unit until legal sunset.
(xvii) We prohibit the use of personal watercraft (e.g., jet skis), airboats, and hovercraft for hunting and fishing on the refuge.

(2) *Upland game hunting*. We allow hunting of squirrel, rabbit, quail, raccoon, opossum, beaver, muskrat, nutria, river otter, mink, bobcat, fox, striped skunk, and coyote on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:
(i) The conditions set forth at paragraphs (a)(1)(i), (ii), (viii), (ix), and (xi) through (xvii) of this section apply.
(ii) Hunters may use shotguns, rifles and handguns chambered for rimfire cartridges, air rifles, and archery tackle.
(iii) We allow squirrel, rabbit, opossum, raccoon, and quail hunting according to season dates and bag limits provided in the annual refuge public use brochure.
(iv) We allow the use of dogs when hunting upland game.
(v) Hunters may enter the refuge beginning at 4 a.m. and must exit the refuge by 1 hour after legal sunset, except that we allow hunting of raccoon and opossum at night (from 30 minutes after legal sunset to 30 minutes before legal sunrise) on the refuge.
(vi) We prohibit hunting from a vehicle.

(3) *Big game hunting*. We allow hunting of deer and turkey, and the incidental take of feral hog, on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:
(i) The conditions set forth at paragraphs (a)(1)(i), (ii), (viii), (ix), and (xi) through (xvii), (2)(v), and (2)(vi) of this section apply.
(ii) We allow archery/crossbow, modern gun, and muzzleloader deer hunting according to season dates and bag limits provided in the annual refuge public use brochure.
(iii) Turkey hunting will be conducted in the Bison, Waterfowl Sanctuary, and Mingo Creek Hunt Units according to season dates and bag limits provided in the annual refuge public use brochure.
(iv) Hunters may use only shotguns with slugs, muzzleloaders, handguns with barrel lengths greater than 4 inches, large-bore air rifles, and archery/crossbow tackle for modern gun deer hunting on the Bison, Core Waterfowl Area, and Waterfowl Sanctuary Hunt Units.
(v) You may erect portable stands and blinds 7 days prior to the refuge deer season and

must remove them from the waterfowl sanctuary prior to November 15, except for stands used by quota gun deer hunters, which you must remove by the last day of the quota gun deer hunt (see §27.93 of this chapter). You must remove all stands on the remainder of the refuge within 7 days of the closure of archery season (see §27.93 of this chapter).
(vi) We prohibit leaving any tree stand, blind, or game camera on the refuge without the owner's Arkansas Game and Fish Commission customer identification number clearly written on it in a conspicuous location.
(vii) We prohibit the possession or use of lead shot and buckshot for deer hunting. We allow lead shot for turkey hunting.
(viii) During the quota gun deer hunt, we allow only hunters possessing a valid quota gun deer hunting permit (FWS Form 3-2439) on the refuge and only for the purposes of deer hunting and the incidental take of allowable species.
(ix) Hunters may only take feral hog incidental to modern gun and muzzleloader deer hunts and during specified periods for archery deer hunting according to season dates provided in the annual refuge public use brochure.
(x) We prohibit the use of dogs for deer hunting.
(xi) During the quota turkey hunts, only hunters possessing a valid quota turkey hunting permit (FWS Form 3-2439) will be allowed to enter the open hunt units and only for the purposes of turkey hunting.

C. Refuge-Specific Fishing Regulations

Fishing permitted year-round, subject to seasonal area closures. To ensure compatibility with refuge purposes and the mission of the Refuge System, fishing must be conducted in accordance with State regulations, as supplemented by refuge-specific regulations, and described in refuge information sheets/brochures. Stipulations are detailed in the Fishing CD (Appendix C). The following fishing regulations apply at Bald Knob NWR:

(4) *Sport fishing*. We allow sport fishing, frogging, and crawfishing on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:
(i) The conditions set forth at paragraph (1)(ii), (xi), (xv) through (xvii), and (a)(3)(viii) and (xi) above apply.
(ii) We prohibit the take or possession of turtles and/or mollusks (see §27.21 of this chapter).
(iii) We allow fishing, frogging, and crawfishing for personal use only. All crawfish traps must have the owner's Arkansas Game and Fish Commission license customer identification number permanently affixed.
(iv) You may enter the refuge to fish, frog, or crawfish beginning at 4 a.m. and must exit by 1 hour after legal sunset.
(v) We prohibit tournament fishing on the refuge.

D. Relevant State Regulations

The refuge conducts its hunting and fishing program within the framework of Federal and State regulations. Hunting and fishing on the refuge is in some cases more restrictive than AGFC regulations. The refuge coordinates with the State as needed to maintain regulations and programs that are consistent with the State's management programs. Refuge-specific hunting and fishing regulations are listed in Section IV, subsections B and C, respectively.

- Hunter Orange or Chartreuse must be worn in accordance with Arkansas Game and Fish Commission regulations during Quota Gun and Muzzleloader Deer hunts.

- Portable, pop-up blinds must have 144 square inches of blaze orange or chartreuse visible from all sides of the blind during firearms big-game seasons on the Refuge.

- Dog training allowed September 1- April 1.

- Bag limits for all species except deer are the same as state limits.

- The use of dogs for deer hunting is prohibited.

- If White County becomes part of the CWD management zones implemented by AGFC, CWD regulations will apply on the refuge.

- Use of natural scents or lures that contain natural deer and elk urine or other bio fluids is prohibited.

- Possession or use of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.

E. Other Refuge Rules and Regulations for Hunting and Fishing

The Bald Knob NWR annual public use brochures will be annually updated to reflect more specific information and restrictions, including seasons, days, times, bag limits, access, licenses and permits, allowable hunting and fishing devices and ammunition, other equipment, quota application process, and other refuge-specific regulations.

Access and Vehicle Use

- Waterfowl sanctuaries, indicated on the refuge map, are closed to ALL entry and public use, including hunting and fishing, from November 15 through February 28.
- A portion of the waterfowl hunt area (Core Waterfowl Area) will be closed from November 15 – February 28 to ALL public entry and use after 1 pm to reduce waterfowl disturbance and improve hunt quality (see map). During this period Coal Chute Road, Granary West Road parking area and Frackin Road will remain open to vehicular access. NOTE: This closure will NOT apply to all-day hunting for geese during the State Conservation Order.
- Hunters may access refuge hunting areas from 4 am until 1 hour after sunset. Hunters tracking wounded or downed animals may stay until the animal is found or the search is deemed unsuccessful. Hunters trailing or retrieving deer after hours should call the Refuge Office at (501)724-2458 and leave a message stating their name, phone number and the general area in which they are searching for or retrieving deer.
- Conventional vehicles may be used only on the Farm Unit and ONLY from March 1-November 14. Conventional vehicles must meet all applicable federal and state requirements regulating the use of licensed motor vehicles. Vehicles equipped with oversize tractor lug type tires are prohibited. Use of conventional vehicles is prohibited on the Mingo Creek Unit.
- Speed Limit for motor vehicles (including ATVs, UTVs, etc.) is 25 mph unless otherwise posted.

- Recreational use of ATVs is not allowed. ATVs may ONLY be used September 1 to March 31 and ONLY to provide access for hunting. ATVs may be used after March 31 ONLY for goose hunting during the State Conservation Order.
- An ATV is defined as a vehicle with a maximum tire pressure of 15 psi, maximum dry weight of 1550 lbs., and with tires having a maximum centerline lug depth of one inch. Only those vehicles originally designed by their manufacturer to be ATVs are allowed; mini-trucks or other modified off-road vehicles are prohibited.
- Conventional vehicles and ATVs are not allowed in fields and must stay on maintained roads, levee tops, or established parking areas at all times.
- Roads may be closed any time conditions or other administrative needs warrant. A locked gate or other barrier, road closed sign, or no vehicle sign means the road is closed to ALL vehicle travel, but not to foot travel unless signed otherwise.
- Parking of vehicles on roadsides that prevents the passage of extra-wide farm equipment is prohibited. Vehicles are subject to be towed at owner's expense.
- Personal watercraft (jet-ski, etc.), hover craft, and airboats are prohibited.
- Boats may not be left overnight on the Refuge.

Prohibited Hunting Activities

- Leaving any tree stand, ground blind, or game camera on the refuge without the owner's AGFC license customer ID number clearly written in a conspicuous location.
- Driving or screwing any metal object into a tree or hunting from a tree in which a metal object has been driven or screwed to support a hunter.
- Building or hunting from permanent blinds or stands.
- Hunting from a vehicle or use of a vehicle as a deer stand.
- Possession or distribution of bait or hunting over bait, salt, grain, or other feed that could serve as a lure or attraction for wildlife.
- Hunting from mowed or maintained roads or levees, except for waterfowl hunting.
- Commercial hunting/fishing/guiding.
- Loaded hunting firearms or muzzleloaders in or on a vehicle, ATV, or boat under power. "Loaded" is defined as having shells in the firearm or an ignition device in/on the muzzleloader.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting and Fishing Program

The Refuge maintains a mailing list, for information bulletin purposes, to local newspapers, radio, and websites. Special announcements and articles may be released in conjunction with hunting and fishing seasons. In addition, information about hunting will be available at Bald Knob NWR headquarters or on the Bald Knob NWR website.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunting and Fishing Program

Based on the comments received during the CCP (2009) and given the fact that hunting and fishing have been allowed on Bald Knob NWR since its inception, little negative public reaction is expected. Hunting and fishing are important economic and recreational uses of Arkansans natural resources. The public is expected to welcome the additional hunting opportunities proposed (See Appendix D for public comment received and Service response).

C. How Hunters and Anglers Will Be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations

General information regarding hunting and other wildlife-dependent public uses can be obtained at Bald Knob NWR headquarters at 1439 Coal Chute Road, Bald Knob, AR 72010 or by calling (501) 724-2458. Dates, forms, hunting unit directions, maps, applications, and permit requirements about hunting opportunities will be available on the station website at: https://www.fws.gov/refuge/baldknob/ and at the Refuge Visitor Center. Additional information may be obtained from the AGFC website at https://www.agfc.com/.

VI. Compatibility Determination

Hunting and fishing are compatible with the purposes of the refuge. See attached Hunting and Fishing CDs (Appendix B and C).

References

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1995. Bald Knob NWR Hunt Plan. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Region.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1996. Bald Knob NWR Fish Plan. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Region.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2009. Comprehensive Conservation Plan, Central Arkansas National Wildlife Refuge Complex Bald Knob, Big Lake, Cache River, and Wapanocca National Wildlife Refuges. Atlanta, GA. 523 pp.

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Bald_Knob/about.html