HUNTING PLAN

ST. VINCENT NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

March 24, 1987

RECOMMENDED BY:  Date 3/25/87
Project Leader

REVIEWED BY:  Date 4/21/87
Branch of Wildlife & Habitat Management

DATE 4/21/87

Branch of Planning & Coordination

DATE 4/21/87

Refuge Supervisor

DATE 4/21/87

APPROVED BY:  Date 05/08/87
Regional Director
I. INTRODUCTION

A. Description of Habitat - The St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1968 as a waterfowl sanctuary and contains 12,490 acres. The primary feature is the four-by-nine mile, 12,358 acre St. Vincent Island 6 miles southwest of Apalachicola in Franklin County, Florida. The island is triangular in shape. It is dominated by a series of east to west sand ridges less than 20 feet above mean sea level and contains many natural biocommunities. The island contains a unique mix of beach dunes, saltwater and freshwater marshes, sloughs and lakes, pine-palmetto flatlands and hardwood hammocks.

Table 1. St. Vincent Island's habitat includes a variety of vegetation types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Habitat/Vegetative Type</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tidal Marsh</td>
<td>2,899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slash Pine-Mixed Understory</td>
<td>2,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slash Pine/Cabbage Palm - Hammock</td>
<td>1,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrub Oak Dunes</td>
<td>1,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawgrass, Brush, Hypericum Marsh</td>
<td>1,144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slash Pine/Palmetto/Ilex</td>
<td>1,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Oak Dunes</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattail</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshwater Lakes</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabbage Palm</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed Live-Scrub Oak Dunes</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardwood Hammock</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Oak/Grass Dune</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saltwater Pond</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slash Pine/Grass Dune</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand Pine - Scrub Oak</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,358</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. **Proposal** - The Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of the Interior proposes to continue upland game and big game hunting on St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge. The Service also proposes to add sambar deer (*Cervus unicolor*) to the list of legal game. These proposals are consistent with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Policy on public hunting within the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge Manual 8 RM 5.1). Service policy stipulates that the Secretary of the Interior is authorized by the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 and the National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act of 1966, as amended, to permit hunting on any refuge within the system upon a determination that hunting is compatible with the major purposes for which such areas were established.

The proposal will allow the continuation of regulated sport archery and gun hunting of white-tailed deer, feral pig, wild turkey and raccoon and will initiate sambar deer hunting. Hunting will be allowed within the framework established by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission (FGFWFC) through the issuance of annual regulations which establish open seasons, season lengths, daily bags and possession limits.

C. **Hunt History** - St. Vincent MWR is open to upland game hunting (50 CFR 32.21) and big game hunting (50 CFR 32.31). Hunters have always had to provide their own transportation over coastal waters to reach St. Vincent Island. Feral pig hunting was initiated in 1969. The first white-tailed deer hunt was conducted in 1970. Raccoons were hunted 1970-73, but not since. The first turkey hunt was conducted in 1979. Three and/or four-day archery and primitive weapons hunts (at least one each) have been conducted annually since 1970. Archery and primitive weapons hunting has become a tradition on St. Vincent and is recognized in its Objectives.
Statement. The number of annual hunts and bag limits were adjusted to achieve the Service's management objectives set in coordination with the FGFWFC. Permits during the last six years have been issued on the island on a first-come, first-served basis.

Hunter camping was allowed during the initial hunt in 1969 and continued through the present. Due to the hazards - rough waters, winds, tides and fog - associated with coastal waters, camping has been allowed to facilitate the hunts. Permitted camping, that has begun the day before the hunts began, has allowed hunters the opportunity or option to cross coastal waters during daylight rather than having to risk early morning or late evening crossing in the dark. Camping has been allowed on each end of the island, in designated sites, near hunter information/check stations.

Emphasis, with some variances, has historically been on manpower rather than horsepower. Hunters have walked or used bicycles to reach the interior of the island. The majority, the last couple of years, especially on the island's western end with the firmest sand trails, have used bicycles. Designated circuitous routes or "game runs" have been made twice daily on each end of the island to assist hunters with game transportation to the check stations. Hunters that have desired to use the game run have had to transport their game to the designated route. In the past hunters were also allowed to "ride out" on the game run vehicle in the morning and "ride in" in the evening, space permitting. The more recent approach has been to emphasize the primitive use concept and/or the primitive nature of St. Vincent's hunts. Disabled hunters have been allowed to ride to the interior, and return, on the game run vehicle and successful hunters have been given the option of riding with
their game, space permitting, to the check station if they were not using a bicycle.

Hunter safety has always been a concern. A limit on the number of gun hunters allowed on the island was initiated in 1971. During the late 70's through the present a cap of 450 archery hunters and 300 gun hunters was maintained for safety and hunt quality considerations. Some of the early archery hunts experienced hunter complaints and comments from hunters concerned with safety and hunt quality. In 1985 the number of gun hunters on the smaller, but more accessible Indian Pass or west end of the island exceeded 180. Hunters again expressed concerns about safety and quality. A few gun hunters were asked to go to the big or east end of the island. Those hunters asked, did so without complaint. During the January, 1987 primitive weapons hunt only 150 hunters were allowed on the west end. A modern weapons hunt for feral pig only was held in 1980. Due to the high number of prosecuted violations (43) that resulted, no additional modern firearms hunts have been planned.

Sambar deer, a native of Southeast Asia, was introduced on St. Vincent Island in 1908 by R.V. Pierce. The animals were hunted on a limited basis prior to the purchase of the island by the USFWS in 1968. Since 1968, there has been no authorized hunting of sambar. However, there have been several incidents of poaching and accidental/illegal shootings during annual whitetail hunts.

In 1978, the Service proposed to eliminate sambar deer through public hunting, etc., from St. Vincent Island. The proposal was not well received. The Apalachicola City Commissioners and the Franklin County Board of
County Commissioners passed resolutions supported by State Legislators opposing the elimination plan. The resolutions requested research regarding the sambar's effect on native fauna and flora be completed prior to consideration of a removal program. A study was completed by University of Georgia graduate researchers Steve Shea and Les Flynn in August 1986.

II. CONFORMANCE WITH STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1968 under authority contained in the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (45 Stat. 1222). This Hunting Plan only addresses hunting of upland and big game. The upland and big game hunting program will be implemented through time and space zoning which will enable its integration with other refuge management programs including waterfowl sanctuary protection. Hunting is widely recognized as an integral part of a comprehensive wildlife conservation program. Upland and big game hunting will open on approximately 11,450 acres of the 12,358 acre St. Vincent Island. However, terrain (deep marsh) will exclude use of an additional 1,250 acres. Hunters will be excluded from eagle nesting areas. Hunted species have apparently not normally used tidal marsh during hunt periods; hunters have not hunted the tidal marsh. Shorebird and songbird populations will be at their lowest during the winter months. Therefore, the continuation of upland and big game hunting on St. Vincent NWR is compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established and in compliance with the Refuge Administration Act. The initial cost of the hunting program (including the addition of sambar deer hunting) will be approximately $8,000, and the annual cost thereafter will be approximately $6,000. Within the annual refuge budget of approximately $125,000, the necessary funds are available for hunt program administration.
Therefore, upland and big game hunting is in compliance with the Refuge Recreation Act. An estimated 1,800 hunter visits will be recorded annually.

III. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

Refuge Objectives approved in June, 1985 are as follows:

1. Waterfowl Maintenance - 400,000 use days
2. Other Migratory Bird Maintenance - 1,500,000 use days
3. Waterfowl Production - 100 wood ducks to flight
4. Threatened Species Maintenance - 1,600,000 use days
5. Threatened Species Production - 500 animals (including the American alligator)
6. Public Use - Provide 29,000 activity hours including:
   - 4,000 AH - Wildlife Interpretation
   - 1,000 AH - Environmental Education
   - 15,000 AH - Hunting
   - 5,000 AH - Fishing
   - 4,000 AH - Wildlife Observation

Managing and preserving the natural barrier island and associated native plant and animal communities are priorities emphasized in the refuge's Mission Statement.

Formal objectives in terms of numbers of animals for various species of wildlife have not been established. Inherent in the Service policies and the St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge's Mission Statement is the desirability of maintaining wildlife populations compatible with St. Vincent Island habitat.

The effect of the hunts on approved objectives will be as follows:

1. Waterfowl Maintenance - The hunts will be held in November-January. The freshwater lakes are surrounded by marshes that exclude hunter entry
into primary waterfowl use areas. The species historically hunted and the sambar deer have seldom used the Mallard Slough area or other tidal marsh frequented by waterfowl. Disturbances to waterfowl will be minimal.

There will be very limited use of lead buckshot in areas frequented by waterfowl. Therefore, restrictions limiting hunters to nontoxic shot will not be necessary.

2. **Other Migratory Bird Maintenance** - Marsh and water birds, hawks, etc., will occasionally be flushed from one area to another. Songbird and shorebird use will be at its lowest during the winter months. Maintenance objectives will not be impacted.

3. **Waterfowl Production** - The hunting of raccoons will decrease wood duck nest predation.

4. **Threatened Species Maintenance** - There will be no impact on this objective. The eagle nesting areas will be closed to all entry. Closed areas will eliminate legal hunter entry into the primary nest zone; therefore, disturbance will be minimal. Alligators, indigo snakes, peregrine falcons, wood storks, and sea turtles will not be affected. Hunters have been and will be cautioned during the pre-hunt safety/regulations meetings about the presence of eagles and the large indigo snakes. Hunters seldom see the large snakes. Peregrine falcons, wood storks and sea turtles visit the refuge prior to hunt dates. Hunters observe alligators without undue disturbing them.
5. **Threatened Species Production** - The hunts could potentially increase the production of loggerhead sea turtles by reducing the feral pig and raccoon populations. The hunts will have no impact on the production of bald eagles.

6. **Wildlife Interpretation** and **Environmental Education** - There will be an indirect effect on these objectives. Some hunters will be prompted to at least think about the deer habitat management and the loggerhead sea turtle/raccoon relationships. The pre-hunt meetings will also expose hunters to some aspects of environmental education.

8. **Hunting** - The continuance of the hunts will generate enough activity hours to achieve refuge objectives. The addition of sambar deer to the list of legal game will increase the activity hours.

9. **Fishing** - There will be a small increase in fishing pressure due to the hunts.

10. **Wildlife Observation** - The hunts have generated and will continue to generate approximately 3,000 activity hours of wildlife observation. The hours have and will be expended in "scouting" for deer, feral pig and turkey. Many hunters report observing several species of refuge wildlife, game and non-game.

**IV. ASSESSMENT**

A. **Big Game** - White-tailed deer population estimates have ranged from 175-450. There is no appreciable predation on white-tailed deer. Studies on bar-
rier islands have shown that white-tailed deer populations fluctuated in response to harvest and mast availability. Fluctuations generally followed a pattern. A year of poor mast production was followed by a substantially lower population the next year.

Sambar deer compete with white-tailed deer for the fall mast crop. The recently completed sambar ecology study documented a 38 percent dietary overlap between the sambar and white-tailed deer. At least 18 percent of the sambar's 1984 fall diet consisted of acorns.

Service policy (7 RM 8.1) permits the continued existence or management of an exotic on refuge lands only if it has become established and its elimination, while desirable, is no longer practicable or it has become established and maintained on a non-augmented basis for at least 25 years and does not conflict with refuge objectives.

The elimination of the exotic sambar deer could possibly be justified due to the current level of competition with the native white-tailed deer. However, elimination is not practicable due to the length of time the animal has been on the island and its attendant public interest, especially the interest of at least local Floridians (see Hunt History). Managing the population through public hunting will be a compromise solution. Hunting is viewed by the Service as an acceptable, traditional form of wildlife-oriented recreation that can be, and is sometimes used as a management tool to effectively manipulate wildlife population levels (8 RM 5.1).
Hunting will also make possible the gathering of additional biological data to augment current knowledge. Further insight regarding the level of competition and the desirable sambar deer population will be possible. Sambar deer population estimates range from 167-209 (Les Flynn). The population, through public hunting, will be reduced to approximately 100 animals. It is believed that the reduction, followed by annual harvest for 6-8 years equal to recruitment in concert with feral pig control, will be sufficient to measure any potential response by the whitetail population. It is assumed that a significantly positive response by the whitetail population will be at least partially indicative of the degree of any detrimental effects of current competition.

Sambar do not breed as prolifically as whitetail. Therefore, a large population increase through increased recruitment, following herd reduction, is not expected. Annual recruitment has been estimated at approximately 12-15 percent.

The population estimates of the introduced feral pig have ranged from 150-800 animals. Feral pigs compete with white-tailed deer for habitat, mast and destroy loggerhead sea turtle nests. Feral pigs cause trail damage by rooting. Hunting of feral pigs will help decrease the population.

Turkey populations are estimated to be 25-50 birds. The small number of turkey that will be harvested will not limit the population.
B. Upland Game - The raccoon population is estimated to be approximately 1,000 animals. Raccoons destroy nests of loggerhead sea turtles, soft-shelled turtles, songbirds and gallinaceous birds. Harvest by hunters will augment population control.

V. DESCRIPTION OF HUNTING PROGRAM

A. Species Use Areas - Raccoons use more of the island's habitat (12,300 acres) than any of the other game species. Sambar deer use, at least seasonally, approximately 9,400 acres (excluding tidal marsh). They occasionally pass through the tidal marsh areas, but usually only visit the edges. Even though sambar use most island habitats, they are concentrated on the eastern half of the island. Track counts indicate that most of the 200 animals use east of Road No. 3. Feral pigs have normally made use of most of the island except the deeper portions of the large expanse of sawgrass, brush, hypericum marsh between Lakes 4 and 5 and west of Lake 5. White-tailed deer have normally used only approximately 8,200 acres of the island. They only frequent the edges of the tidal marsh (2,900 acres), freshwater lakes (245 acres), beaches (400 acres) and only approximately half of the 1,144 acres (600) of the sawgrass, brush, hypericum marsh. Turkeys possibly, occasionally fly over additional habitats, but primarily use areas frequented by whitetails.

B. Hunt Area and Hunter Access - All areas of the refuge, except eagle nesting areas (850 acres) will be open to hunting. However, only 10,200 acres, including 2,900 acres of tidal marsh, will be accessible by hunters on foot. Terrain,
deep water or marsh, will normally preclude hunter entry into the remainder of the island (1,250 acres).

During hunts island access or entry points will usually be restricted to two designated hunter information/check station sites. An information/check station will be on each end of the island (east end or West Pass and west end or Indian Pass). Additional hunter access or permitted entry points will depend on management needs (see map in Appendix).

Hunters will be allowed to use bicycles. Motorized or equipment use by hunters will be prohibited with two exceptions. Two daily "game runs", circuitous routes, will be made to assist hunters with game transportation. Successful hunters will be given the option to ride with their game, space permitting, and they do not have a bicycle (check station operations progress more smoothly when the successful hunter accompanies the game), and disabled hunters will have carte blanche riding privileges during game runs.

C. Hunted Species - Species taken will include white-tailed and sambar deer, feral pig, wild turkey and raccoon. Hunting will be in accordance with State regulations and refuge specific regulations. Bag limits will be adjusted in coordination with the FGFWFC to achieve the Service's management objectives. Feral pig will be allowed in the bag during deer hunts. Turkey and raccoon will be allowed in the bag during whitetail hunts.
D. **Hunting Periods and Weapons** - Hunting will normally occur within the regular State gun season, November through January. Refuge hunts will normally be conducted for 1-3 day periods or until the desired number of deer have been removed. Two to three hunts will normally be conducted. The number will depend on Service objectives. At least the initial sambar deer hunt will be for a 1-day period.

Sambar hunting should be conducted separately from the historical whitetail hunting in order to avoid disrupting what has historically been smooth, manageable, first come permit basis hunts. However, once the sambar herd is reduced to approximately 100 animals, management will have the option of conducting separate whitetail and sambar hunts or conducting a combined hunt.

In keeping with the primitive use concept, hunting methods will exclude modern firearms. Primitive weapons hunting (archery and blackpowder gun) will be conducted. Any additional weapons restrictions, deregulations or other regulation changes will be based on hunt objectives, animal population control needs and/or public safety.

E. **Permit Requirements** - Permits will be required. Permits will be necessary to control hunter numbers. St. Vincent has a history of some of the best deer hunting in Florida. Consequently, hunter interest or pressure, unchecked, will exceed safe conditions and hunt quality will suffer proportionally. Hunter interest is increasing and will increase further following the initiating of sambar hunting. The consequences of overcrowding will be compounded by St. Vincent's
brushy habitat and its series of island-long sand ridges that parallel flooded sawgrass sloughs. The terrain concentrates or funnels hunters down narrow bands of habitat.

A cap or quota on the number of hunters allowed on the island at any one time, each hunt, will be necessary. The caps will be adjusted as necessary to attain Service objectives.

Permits for the historical hunts, white-tailed deer with feral pigs in the bag, and in the future, raccoon, will be issued on a first come basis as long as practical or doing so does not result in unacceptable inconveniences to the public. The sambar deer hunt, at least the first few years due to public interest, will require a pre-hunt draw for the quota permits. Since the sambar are concentrated toward the east end of the island, the permits, initially, will only be issued for the eastern end access. Therefore, only half (150) the normal number of primitive weapons permits will be issued. By initially restricting access to only one end of the island for sambar hunting, management will have a much better opportunity to learn how to assist hunters with the 350-700 pound animals. The number of permits issued and the access points thereafter, will be determined by management objectives.

Should a pre-hunt draw become desirable for whitetail archery and/or primitive weapons (gun) hunting, consideration will be given to combining whitetail and sambar hunting. The decision to combine will take into account the potential impact sambar hunting could have on the desired reduction of whitetail.
F. Control and Enforcement - Refuge check stations will be maintained, during the hunts, on one or both ends of St. Vincent Island (see map in Appendix). On hunt days the stations will be staffed from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset. Hunter check-in (and out) will be required each hunt. Three refuge employees have law enforcement authority. Their time will be split between normal enforcement and check station duties. When considered necessary additional staff will be available from the FGFWFC's Division of Enforcement and/or other refuges. Volunteers, following training, will be used to assist with or conduct check station activities. Approximately six persons (3-4 refuge staff and 2-3 volunteers) will be necessary to conduct refuge hunts involving check stations on each end of the 9-mile island. Additional volunteer assistance will be necessary during times when refuge staff with enforcement authority are involved elsewhere. (See Section II for costs.)

Hunters will also be required to observe stand hours during the mornings until approximately 9:00 A.M. Hunters will be allowed to check in beginning at 9:00 A.M. one day prior to the hunt and will be required to check out (remove equipment from the island) by 1:00 P.M. the day following the hunt.

G. Safety - Florida has recently passed legislation that will require hunters to wear fluorescent orange (500 square inches) when taking deer on State Management Areas. When the FGFWFC begins enforcing the use of fluorescent orange by archery hunters on its management areas, the Service will follow suit. Gun deer hunters have historically been required to wear fluorescent orange on St. Vincent. Man driving will be prohibited.
H. Variances with State Regulations - St. Vincent's Objectives Statement emphasizes that public use management will be provided by a primitive use concept with only primitive accomodations and motorized vehicles and equipment will be excluded. St. Vincent's primitive weapons hunting, archery and blackpowder gun, has been an enhancement of that concept and should remain so.

Florida does not regulate the taking of sambar deer that occasionally leave St. Vincent Island. There is no closed season. Therefore, by conducting a limited sambar deer hunt, the Service will be putting the animal on par with the sika at Chincoteague NWR or the ring-necked pheasant at Pea Island and other national wildlife refuges.

Florida allows one doe or antlerless deer for a short period during its regular gun season in November. An additional hunt in conjunction with an increase to a two deer of either sex bag, instead of one, was proposed and approved by the FGFWFC in 1985. Dr. Victor Mettles, Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, recommended that the white-tailed deer herd not be allowed to increase following the examination of five deer taken in August, 1986. The five deer were taken following the 1985-86 hunts during which approximately 200 white-tailed deer were removed. The herd was estimated to have been reduced from approximately 450-500 to 250-300. Subsequent data indicated that the herd had been reduced from approximately 350-400 to 150-200. Either sex hunting and liberal bags will continue when considered necessary following consultations with the FGFWFC.
A Florida Statue (FS 790.22) addresses hunting by youths less than 16 years of age and adult supervision. However, numbers of youths that can be supervised by an adult and the minimum age of the supervising adult are not addressed. Refuge specific regulations will be more restrictive.

I. Consultation and Coordination Procedure - This plan has been discussed and drafted in consultation with Service biologist Wendell Metzen and FGFWFC biologists and staff in Panama City, Florida Northwest District Office. A letter of concurrence with the planned hunting program is appended.

Biological data collection will be coordinated with the FGFWFC Northwest District biologist. When possible, a FGFWFC biologist will assist with check station data collection. Following annual hunts, data and needs will be discussed with the FGFWFC prior to drafting the Service's subsequent refuge specific regulations and/or prior to the annual Service/State Regulations Coordination Meeting.

J. Miscellaneous (camping and pre-hunt scouting) - Hunter camping, as long as considered necessary to facilitate/enhance hunt success, to meet hunt objectives or to be in the public interest, will be allowed on either end of the island as appropriate, in designated sites.

The refuge is open during daylight hours year-round, except during periods of high fire danger. Therefore, ample scouting or wildlife observation is permitted.
VI. MEASURES TAKEN TO AVOID CONFLICTS WITH OTHER OBJECTIVES

A. Biological Conflicts - A Section 7 Consultation, involving potential impacts of the hunts on bald eagles, indigo snakes, peregrine falcons, and wood storks has been completed. Scheduling closed areas, education, law enforcement and terrain will limit conflicts to other species.

B. Public Use Conflicts - Although not prohibited, other public uses will be discouraged during the hunts. There has been little demand for other types of public use during the winter months and especially during hunt periods, so the conflict potential will be minimal. Potential users will be encouraged to inquire regarding hunt periods prior to going to the island.

C. Administrative Conflicts - Application permits for the sambar deer hunt will involve an additional administrative workload. An application-permit system will minimize administrative conflicts and reduce potential public relations problems.

VII. CONDUCT OF THE HUNT

A. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations; Big Game - Hunting of white-tailed and sambar deer, turkey and feral pigs is permitted on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:
   1. Permits are required.
   2. Archery hunting is permitted for three consecutive days beginning on the second Thursday in December.
3. Primitive weapons hunting is permitted for one day on the first Saturday of the regular State deer gun season and three consecutive days beginning on the second Thursday in January.

4. Hunters are required to check in and out of the refuge.

5. White-tailed deer may be harvested only until refuge harvest quotas are reached.

6. One white-tailed deer of either sex may be taken during the archery hunt.

7. One white-tailed antlered deer may be taken during the three-day primitive weapons hunt.

8. One sambar deer of either sex may be taken during the one-day primitive weapons hunt.

9. One turkey of either sex may be taken during each three-day hunt.

10. During the archery and primitive weapons hunts, hunters must remain on their stands from one-half hour before sunrise to 9:00 A.M.

11. Hunters must wear a visible outer garment of daylight fluorescent orange material during the primitive weapons hunts.

12. Only still and stalk hunting are permitted.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations; Upland Game

Hunting of raccoon is permitted on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

1. Permits are required.

2. Raccoons are permitted in the bag during any scheduled December and January deer hunt.
3. Raccoons may be taken only according to State and refuge specific regulations governing white-tailed deer hunting.

C. **Anticipated Public Reactions** - Public reaction will be favorable to the hunting of white-tailed deer, feral pig, wild turkey and raccoon. Some negative public reaction to the hunting of sambar deer is possible. Many potential sambar deer hunters, especially local hunters, will probably be disturbed when not drawn for a sambar permit. The degree of disturbance will be proportional to the number of applicants.

D. **Application Procedures and Hunter Selection Process** - When considered necessary or prudent a pre-hunt public drawing from applications will be conducted to select hunters for the various hunts. Applications will be in the form of a 3½"X5" postcard, bearing on the back the applicant's full name(s) and address(es) and hunt choice if applicable. The number of applicants allowed in a party will be annually determined based on Service objectives. Only one application will be accepted from each person or party. Duplicate applications will constitute a disqualification. Permits will be non-transferable. The date of the public drawing will be determined by the hunt(s) or hunt date(s) for which hunters will be required to apply. The actual drawing will be accomplished by a local public official at an announced time and place. As the applications are drawn, they will be numbered consecutively and the successful applicants names will be announced. Only successful applicants will be notified. Permits will be mailed to successful applicants.
Sambar Hunt - Interest will be extremely high; therefore, a public drawing for the sambar primitive weapons permits will be necessary. Applications will be accepted mid-June to July 31. The drawing will be held the first week of August at an announced time and location. Two people may apply as a party.

Historical Hunts or First Come Basis - As long as the current first come basis functions smoothly, it will be continued as the permit issuance method for the normal three-day hunts (archery and primitive weapons). Permits will be issued as hunters arrive at St. Vincent Island access points (check stations) beginning at 9:00 A.M. one day prior to the hunt.

F. Media Selection - The hunts will be publicized in all major newspapers in the State of Florida.

G. Hunter Orientation - A hunter orientation is held at 5:30 P.M. one day prior to the hunts. The orientation will consist of a safety and regulations briefing.

H. Hunter Requirements -
1. Age - Any hunter under the age of 16 (youth hunters) must have successfully passed a State-approved hunter education course and demonstrate completion by a card or certificate. Youth hunters must be supervised by an adult 21 years of age or older, and must remain in sight and normal voice contact with the adult. The adult may supervise only one youth.
2. **Allowable Equipment**
   (a) No motorized vehicles or equipment will be allowed. Bicycles will be permitted.
   (b) Only bows and arrows and primitive weapons (blackpowder guns) will be permitted.

3. **Fires** - Open camp fires will be restricted to designated camping areas.

4. **License and Permits** - A regular State hunting license and applicable State stamp will be required. Hunts occurring during the regular State gun season will not require special State archery or muzzle loader stamps. The State turkey stamp will be required to take turkey.

5. **Reporting Harvest** - Check station personnel will check and when necessary, tag harvested game, prior to its removal from the island.
February 24, 1987

Mr. Jerry L. Holloman
Refuge Manager
St. Vincent National
Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Post Office Box 447
Apalachicola, FL 32320

Dear Mr. Holloman:

Thank you for sending us your draft proposals of the hunting plans for St. Vincent Island which will provide continued hunting of native game and the initiation of sambar deer hunting.

We approve of your basic plans to provide continued hunting of native game and the addition of sambar deer to your "legal to take" list. However, we feel a management plan should be developed for sambar deer that contains all of the background material such as population census, reproductive potential and other pertinent biological information. This plan should clearly state the management goals and objectives, and the specific plans for attempting to reach them. The hunting plan would be a component of this plan.

It is difficult to comment on the sambar hunting plan because we are not sure we understand your objective. Do you want to manage on a sustained-yield basis, decrease the numbers, maintain present numbers or increase the population while allowing limited hunting?

Enclosed are the proposals with our comments noted in the margins. Because sambar deer are not classified as game animals in Florida, the Commission considers them the property of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and will probably not become involved in setting regulations for hunting them. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your plans. Please advise if we may be of further assistance in developing or implementing future plans.

Sincerely,

Frank H. Smith, Jr., Chief
Bureau of Wildlife Management

Enclosures

W745/dr
FILE:

Mr. Carlton Chappell
Mr. Tim Breault