

ANNUAL BIG GAME HUNTING PROGRAM
Parker River National Wildlife Refuge
CY 1993

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PARKER RIVER NWR

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A. BIOLOGICAL SOUNDNESS

A Refuge hunt for white-tailed deer is necessary because the population has grown to exceed the recommended carrying capacity of the Island. In past years, overpopulation resulted in habitat damage from overbrowsing. A hunt program was implemented from 1987 through 1990 and the herd was successfully culled to a manageable herd size. Since suspension of the hunt program, the population has again been steadily rising. The program was not held in 1991 and 1992 based on concerns over hunt quality and resultant hunter interest due to a reduced herd size; and administrative costs as staff time, effort and cost were not considered feasible to cull only a few individuals from the population.

Sixty-six deer were observed during the January 1993 aerial census. The actual population is estimated at 82 animals based on the assumption that the census represents only 75% of the population. Based on application of the Fall 1992 spotlight survey doe:buck and doe:fawn ratios to the Winter 1992-93 aerial census, the Fall 1993 population is projected at 74 to 98 deer. This estimate may represent a minimum level based on comparison of actual January 1993 survey data and the projection based on the Fall 1991 ratios and Winter 1991-92 aerial survey. A successful organized hunt could reduce the herd by approximately 50 animals.

This population level exceeds the Master Plan recommendation that the Refuge deer population should not exceed the winter carrying capacity of a maximum of 35 animals. This estimate appears to be on the low side as the herd currently appears to be healthy and habitat damage is not evident. In past years, habitat damage resulted from population levels of well over 100 deer for several consecutive years. An updated study is needed to quantify the carrying capacity of the Refuge.

Hunt justification is also based on concerns for Lyme disease as deer are an intermeditate host of this potentially debilitating disease. An increased population of deer leads to more deer ticks and a greater potential for transmission of Lyme disease to humans.

B. ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY

The estimated cost of a four day hunt would be approximately \$9,000. Within the annual Refuge budget of approximately \$520,000, the necessary funds will be directed for the administration of the hunting program.

In accordance with Region 5 Guidance on Refuge Hunt Fees, a non-refundable fee of \$20 will be charged to each successful applicant.

C. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PROGRAMS AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

The Refuge will be closed for a period of 4.5 days in order to carry out the controlled deer hunt. The general public will be excluded during this time. The exclusion will involve 4.5 consecutive week days. The Refuge receives only minimal public use during this time because of the marginal weather. If an optional fifth day is required to reach the designated quota of approximately 50 animals, the Refuge will be closed an additional 1.5 week days during the following week.

The 1993 hunt program will afford the sporting public an opportunity to engage in up to 1,710 activity hours of hunting.

The 1993 deer hunt program will not impact endangered species, as the hunt is conducted when endangered species are not present on the Refuge.

The Refuge deer hunt does not take place in close proximity to designated Refuge waterfowl hunting areas; therefore, impacts will be minimal, if any. Access to waterfowl hunting areas will not be affected by the Refuge closure.

D. REFUGE SPECIFIC REGULATIONS

Limited white-tailed deer hunting will be allowed on Parker River Refuge (Refuge) by permit only within the Massachusetts (MA) shotgun deer season. All MA regulations apply in addition to the following Refuge specific regulations:

License/Permit Requirements: 1) MA deer hunting license. Zone #10 (antlerless) permit holders will receive selection priority for the Refuge hunt. 2) Refuge deer hunting permit is required.

Hunter Selection: Refer to Rules and Procedures for Hunter Selection.

Orientation/Safety Meeting: Attendance by all hunters, including stand-bys, is mandatory for Saturday, October 30. The orientation will be conducted at the Refuge Headquarters area.

Season: Hunting will be permitted daily from Monday, November 29 through Thursday, December 2 during the MA deer (shotgun) season. Each hunter will be assigned his/her hunt day. If the hunt quota has not been met by sunset, December 2; hunting may be permitted on Monday, December 6.

Hunt Hours: One half hour before sunrise until sunset.

Hunt Zones: Each hunter will be assigned one of two zones (four zones in previous years). Refer to attached map for boundaries.

Parking: Specific parking lots will not be assigned as in past years. However, hunters must park in designated parking lots within their assigned zone.

Bag Limit: A total of two deer may be harvested. Antlerless deer may only be harvested if hunter possesses a Zone #10 (antlerless) MA permit. Hunters with a Zone#10 permit are allowed to harvest 1 antlerless and 1 antlered deer. Hunters without a Zone#10 permit may only harvest 2 antlered deer.

Hunt Equipment: 1) Shotgun - .20 gauge or larger loaded with slugs only. 2) Portable, non-damaging tree stands are permitted.

Deer Check Station: All deer taken, as well as entrails, must be checked in at the Refuge Check Station located at Sub-HQ.

Hunter Check-out: All hunters must check out at the Refuge Check Station no later than one-half hour after sunset prior to leaving for the day.

E. COMPATIBILITY

Parker River National Wildlife Refuge was established by the Migratory Bird Commission for the conservation of migratory waterfowl. Big game hunting will be allowed on approximately 1,400 acres of the 4,662-acre refuge. Big game hunting will be used to manage the Refuge deer population and will occur at times and places that will not significantly impact habitat and cause only temporary, minimal disturbance to other Refuge wildlife. Big game hunting will be managed as an integral part of a comprehensive Refuge wildlife management program.

Prepared by: Joann Raducha Healey Date: 3-1-93
Refuge Biologist

Submitted by: Patricia L. McVintone Date: 3/1/93
Acting Refuge Manager

Reviewed by: VACANT Date: _____
Refuge's North Biologist

Reviewed by: Gay Young Date: 3-23-93
Regional Biologist

Approved by: Donald H. Friskie Date: 3-31-93
Associate Manager, North

RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR HUNTER SELECTION

1. Hunter information will be available starting July 19, 1993.
2. All applications for a Refuge permit must be postmarked by October 1 and received prior to the drawing.
3. Applicants possessing a valid Massachusetts antlerless deer permit for Zone #10 will be given priority in hunter selections; however, an antlerless permit is not required. (NOTE: Applications for the State Zone #10 antlerless deer permit must be sent to the State by August 15.
4. A total of 180 hunters and 20 standbys will be selected by a random computer or hand-drawn lottery for the first four days of the hunt. If a hunt is needed on December 6, hunters interested in hunting and who have not met their two deer quota must call the Refuge on December 3 between 8am and 10am. Those hunters will be selected on a first call/first serve basis. No walk-ins accepted.
5. A maximum of 45 hunters per day will be accommodated.
6. There will be a total of 4 hunt days, with the possibility of a 5th day if needed to reach the deer harvest quota.
7. A total of 20 standbys will be selected to fill any spaces available if any permit holder does not attend mandatory orientation, or if a selected hunter is not able to participate in the Refuge hunt.
8. A lottery, open to the public, will be held at the Refuge Headquarters on October 18, 1993 at 3:30 p.m. All applicants will be notified by mail; however, a self-addressed stamped envelope is required by each applicant.
9. A hunter permit fee of \$20.00 will be charged to successful applicants. The fee will be collected at the Hunter Orientation session. The fee from stand-by hunters will be collected on the day of the hunt.
10. Hunter safety and orientation will be conducted on Saturday, October 30 and Tuesday, November 2. Attendance is mandatory.
11. Hunter assignments will be selected as they are drawn from the lottery, assigning each hunter his/her hunt day(s) and hunting zone.

Hunting Zone Assignments:

Two hunting zones will be established for the 1993 hunt. Refer to the attached map.

- Zone #1**
- Northern Boundary - east/west Beach Access #1
 - Southern Boundary - Knobbs Rd. on west; Camp Sea Haven on east.
 - 23 Hunters (777 acres)
 - Parking Lot #2 - 3 hunters
 - Parking Lot #3 - 3 hunters
 - Subheadquarters Lot - 5 hunters
- Zone #2**
- Northern Boundary - southern boundary of Zone #1
 - Southern Boundary - Refuge boundary with Sandy Point State Reservation
 - 22 Hunters (580 acres)
 - Camp Sea Haven Lot - 3 hunters
 - Parking Lot #5 - 4 hunters
 - Clam Lot - 4 hunters
 - Cross Farm Hill - 3 hunters
 - Parking Lot #6 - 4 hunters
 - Parking Lot #7 - 4 hunters

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 17, 1993
RE: Changes to the "Annual Big Game Hunting Program" Proposal for 1993.

Forthcoming are changes made for the 1993 Deer Harvest at Parker River NWR:

C. Relationship with Other Programs and Recreational Opportunities

- Refuge was closed 4 consecutive week days (November 29, 30; December 1, 2) for the hunt.
- One week day was added for deer hunting during the following week (December 6).

D. Refuge Specific Regulations

- Hunt Zones: hunters were not assigned specific zones to hunt. They were allowed access to all areas on the Refuge, excluding safety zones (entrance of Refuge, Subheadquarters, proximal to Refuge road).
- Parking: hunters were allowed to park in any designated parking space, excluding Lot #1.

Parking capacity limits were established for each parking lot (excluding Lot #1):

| | | |
|------------|------------|---------------------------|
| Lot #2 - 5 | Lot #5 - 5 | 3 Clam lots - 2 |
| Lot #3 - 5 | Lot #6 - 5 | Sea Haven - 3 |
| Sub-HQ - 5 | Lot #7 - 5 | North Pool Cross dike - 3 |

Rules and Procedures for Hunter Selection

- # 4. A total of 180 hunters and 20 standbys were selected on October 18 by hand-drawn lottery for the first four days of the hunt. Fifty hunters for the fifth hunt day (December 6) were selected by hand-drawn lottery at the Hunter Safety and Orientation program on October 30. Hunters for the fifth hunt day were those interested in an additional hunting day or hunters on stand-by.

- #11. Should read: "Hunter assignments will be selected as they are drawn from the lottery, assigning each hunter his/her hunt day(s)".

Hunting Zone Assignments

- Hunters were not assigned zones for hunting. See "D. Refuge Specific Regulations", above.