

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

Refuge Manager, Sherburne NWR

Refuge Manager

Asst. Dir.

State Cons.

Adm. Serv.

Ext. Aff.

Finance

Gen. Inv.

Ident. & Rec.

Insp.

Int. Sec.

Lab.

Legal Coun.

Plan. & Insp.

Spec. Inv.

Training

Off. of Cong. & Public Affairs

Director's Sec'y

Chief of Staff

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

Director's Sec'y

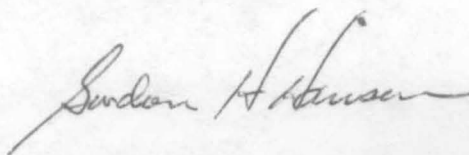
DATE: March 20, 1974

FROM : Regl. Land Mgmt. Supervisor, Twin Cities (LM-RF)

SUBJECT: Fishing Plan - Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge

The Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge fishing plan has been approved by the Washington Office. You may proceed by announcing the proposed rule making in the Federal Register.

We are pleased to convey to you and the staff compliments from the Washington Office regarding your clear, concise presentation of a fishing plan.



Gordon H. Hansen

It does "pay" to modify  
the suggested outline to  
make things "clear & concise!"  
Nice job, Rob!!



5010-108

Buy U.S. Savings Bonds Regularly on the Payroll Savings Plan

FISHING PLAN

SHERBURNE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

BUREAU OF SPORT FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

REGION III

## T A B L E   O F   C O N T E N T S

	<u>Page</u>
I. Program Relation to Refuge Objectives . . . . .	1
II. Program Policies and Administrative Control . . .	2
III. Program Description - Problems and Solutions . .	3
IV. Program Units . . . . .	3
V. Physical Plan and Equipment Use Requirements . .	5
VI. Fund and Man-power Requirements . . . . .	6

### Appendix

Map # 1

Signature Page

## FISHING PLAN

### I. Program Relation to Refuge Objectives

#### A. Refuge Background Establishment

Historically, the lands of Sherburne County abounded with many forms of wild game such as elk, grouse, deer and bear. Ducks, geese and their broods dotted the marshes which held wild rice, pondweeds and other aquatic plants. The Sherburne Marsh played host to large populations of migrating birds during the spring and fall. With the arrival of the white man, the forests were logged off, the sod was broken and seeded to crops. As the demand for farmland grew with the increased population, the river basins became laced with drainage ditches while marsh and meadow were put to the plow. Now only the deep lakes and river channels hold water for ducks and geese and the migrating waterfowl have ceased using this area.

Initial interest to restore the St. Francis marshes as a wildlife area was displayed as far back as the late 1930's by local sportsmen's clubs and wildlife conservation groups. In 1961, Minnesota referred the project to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife for consideration and because of its suitability for waterfowl development and ideal location for improved waterfowl distribution, the area was immediately proposed as a National Wildlife Refuge.

Purchase of the area was approved on May 18, 1965 by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission with legislation including the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Migratory Bird Conservation Act and the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act authorizing its establishment. First land acquisition occurred on October 1, 1965 with a total of 30,522.68 acres to be included within the approved refuge boundary. By July 1971 all but approximately 2,500 acres of this had been acquired. About 1,000 acres were still in private hands, while the other 1,500 acres were either wildlife management lands or forest lands under the ownership of the State of Minnesota. (See Map # 1.)

The conditions have fluctuated some over the years; however, no great change in habitat has occurred so that the Sherburne Marsh continues to produce and support only a fraction of the waterfowl that it is capable of providing. Three major lakes and the St. Francis River total less than 1,000 acres of open water, while associated marshland account for about 5,500 acres.

#### B. Refuge Objectives

- 1.) General The Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge was established primarily for its potential value to migratory

waterfowl in the Mississippi Flyway. Long-range goals include the development of several large impoundments which will provide habitat for several thousand ducks, geese and other birds during migration. Keeping in mind the Bureau's broad goal of promoting harmony between man and his environment, and considering the proximity of Sherburne to a large metro area, it is apparent that public programs will be a major thrust in the future. Management will be directed toward providing wildlife-oriented types of public use including interpretive programs, hunting, fishing, birding, canoeing, wildlife observation, berry-picking, and the like. Use of the refuge by educational institutions will be a high priority, both for college-level research and for Environmental Education activities for elementary and high-school students.

2.) Demand Fishing has long been a traditional activity on the St. Francis River. Although several types of game fish are present in limited numbers, the Northern Pike is the species most sought after by local people. Methods used include still-fishing with minnows in large pools near bridges, and casting with spoons and spinners while canoeing the river. Rough fish, including carp and bullheads are common and a spring "sucker run" occurs soon after the ice goes out. Suckers may be taken by spearing in Minnesota during a short period in the spring.

3.) Recommendations With one or two exceptions to be discussed later, current fishing pressure poses no management problems. We recommend that river access sites now in use be left open for the public during the regular State seasons.

## II. Program Policies and Administrative Control

### A. General

The St. Francis River is a navigable stream and as such, we have no control over use of the river for canoeing and boating. We do, however, intend to restrict access to the river from refuge lands to minimize disturbance to wildlife. Canoeing/fishing through Rice Lake can cause disturbance to waterfowl in the spring and early summer. Migrant waterfowl and nesting geese are easily disturbed during this period. At present, fisherman can put a boat into the river from County Road right-of-way north of Rice Lake. After July 1st, the river drops and Rice Lake becomes nearly unnavigable.

## B. Control

Fishing will be permitted at two public road access points, and from the bank adjacent to three refuge bridges. Canoe accesses have been provided at two locations. Fishermen will be required to restrict their activities to these facilities only.

## III. Program Description - Problems and Solutions

### A. General

Numerous fishing opportunities exist in the area adjacent to the refuge. Several lakes within 10 miles of the boundary support populations of pike, bass and panfish, including Elk, Eagle, Big, Mitchell, Big Elk, Thompson, Birch and Fremont Lakes. Fishing in the St. Francis River is rather unique, however, and is attractive mainly to local people. Currently, refuge fishing is restricted to the St. Francis River only. Refuge lakes and marshes are all shallow and will not support game-fish populations over winter.

### B. Future

Fishing opportunities could be greatly expanded with the development of large impoundments which would undoubtedly support Northern Pike and some panfish. The degree of conflict between fishing and other priorities, mainly waterfowl nesting, would determine how much of this activity could be permitted.

## IV. Program Units

### A. Access Points

Access to the St. Francis River is available at the locations shown on Map 1. For convenience, these sites are grouped into three categories as follows:

#### 1.) County Road Rights-of-way

a.) County Road # 5 Limited access for canoes is available. Heavy vegetation restricts bank fishing.

b.) County Road # 9 Limited access for canoes and small boats is available from right-of-way. Excellent opportunities here for bank fishing on west side of river north of bridge. The large pool at this access is quite popular with local people and the site receives moderate fishing pressure during the summer.

2.) Refuge Road Rights-of-way

- a.) Storlies This site provides some bank fishing and primitive canoe-launching adjacent to the bridge. The river from this site to County Road # 5 is navigable by boat only during the spring.
- b.) Brandes Refuge Road # 22 crosses the St. Francis River at this site in the northeast end of the refuge. Rock bass and other panfish can be taken adjacent to the bridge piling. The river in this area is shallow and quite rocky. The presence of many log jams downstream from the bridge makes this stretch nearly impassable in late spring, summer and fall.

3.) Improved Canoe Launch Sites

- a.) Nikko Bridge This site is located on the river south of Rice Lake. A small parking lot and canoe/boat launch is provided. Limited bank fishing is available adjacent to Refuge Road # 34 about 300 feet north of the bridge. This stretch of river from this site to County Road # 4 is navigable by canoe most of the summer and offers reasonably good fishing.
- b.) River Access at County Road # 4 Bank fishing opportunities here are limited due to heavy vegetation. A primitive canoe access with adjacent parking area has been provided. The river stretch downstream from this site is probably the best on the refuge from the standpoint of navigability, number of deep pools, and other desirable features.

B. Fishing Seasons

As mentioned earlier, most refuge fishing pressure would be for Northern Pike. Open season in 1973 was from May 12-February 15 with a daily limit of three. The St. Francis River normally freezes over in December so the refuge season would normally run from mid-May to mid-November or about 6 months. Provisions may be made to allow limited fishing through the ice during winter. Panfish may be taken year-around but fishing for these species is almost nil at present.

The State of Minnesota allows spearing of rough fish from May 1 to February 15, inclusive. There has been some demand for this type of fishing in the past.

C. Fishing Success

- 1.) Game Fish Northern Pike up to 10 pounds have been taken from the pool at Headquarters, although the average

size fish are probably around two to three pounds. Limits are common among local people, particularly early in the season.

- 2.) Rough Fish Redhorse and White suckers in the 1 to 2 pound class are taken by a few local people in the spring during the respective spawning runs. Bullheads are common in the river-in general, their average size is quite small. Carp are present in larger numbers and they come in all sizes. They offer considerable sport for those who like a fighting fish on the line.

#### D. Fishing Pressure

During 1973, 3,620 fishing visits were recorded for the refuge. About three-fourths of this occurred during the months of June, July and August. The pool at Headquarters receives the heaviest fishing pressure due to the ease of access. There is very limited fishing-through-the-ice pressure during the winter.

#### V. Physical Plan and Equipment Use Requirements

Facilities needed to support a quality fishing program on the refuge would include the following:

##### A. Regulatory Signs

- 1.) Public Fishing Area These signs would be used to designate an area open to public fishing.
- 2.) River Access These signs are being used at Nikko Bridge and Co. Rd. # 4 to designate access to the river for canoeing and/or fishing.
- 3.) Open-Fires Prohibited self-explanatory.
- 4.) Area Beyond This Sign Closed Some additional posting would be required where a "Closed Area" borders on a fishing area; such as, at Nikko Bridge.

##### B. Information Boards

These structures would be maintained at key areas to provide maps and the latest information for fishermen and other refuge visitors.

##### C. Parking Areas

Parking facilities will be provided at canoe accesses and at refuge headquarters for weekend visitors. Trash receptacles will be available. Additional parking may be provided at designated fishing sites if future demand creates a need for more space.



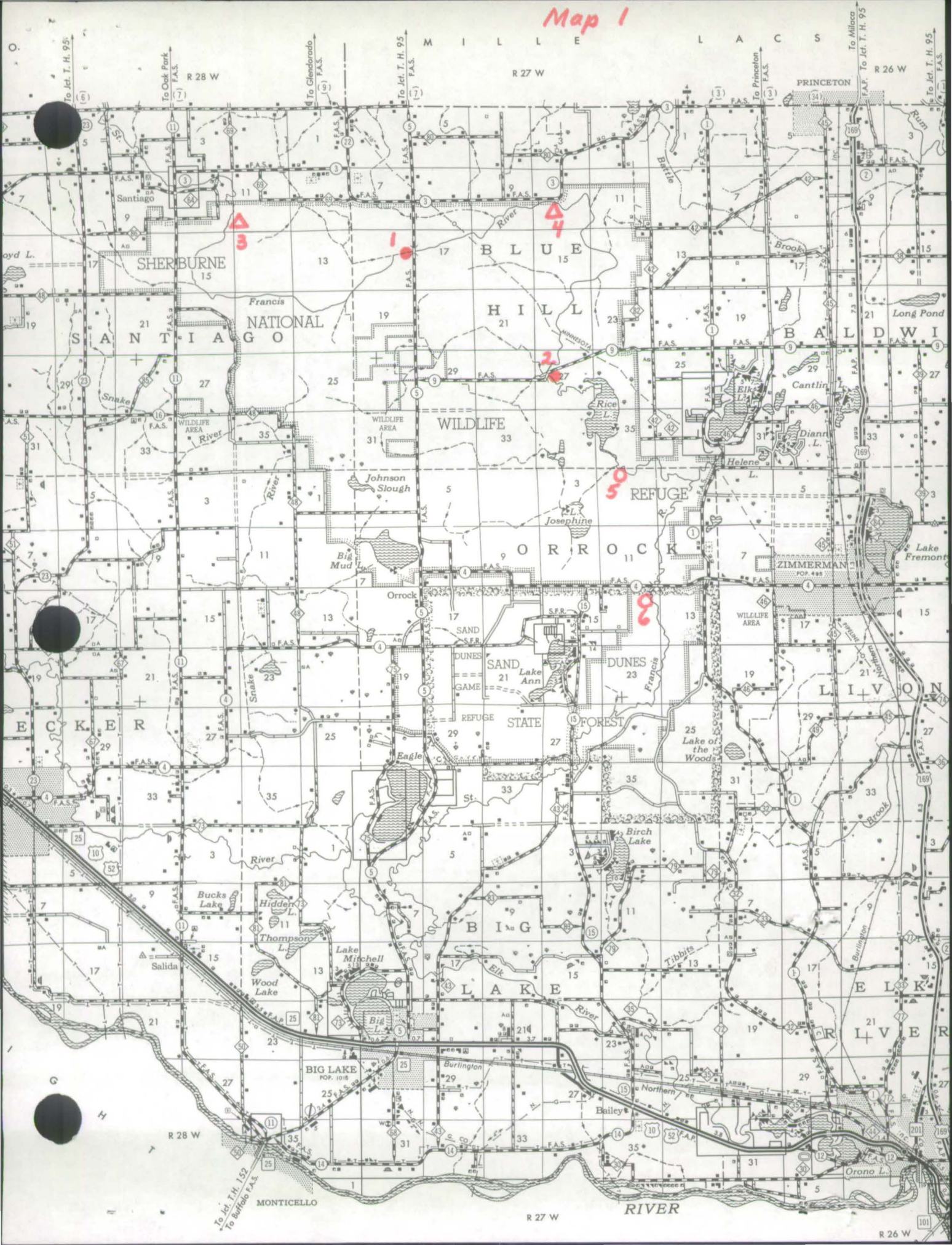
# VI. Fund and Man-power Requirements

Costs to administer a fishing program would fall under the following categories:

<u>Activity</u>	<u># of sites</u>	<u>Labor</u>	<u>Cost</u>
1) Posting and Parking lot maintenance	6	4	\$160
2) Routine patrolling (public use inventory, trash disposal, law enforcement)	6	4	160
3) Administrative Costs, Public Inquiries, etc.		2	80
		<u>10</u>	<u>\$400</u>

man-days

Map 1



### LEGEND

- 1 Co. Rd # 5
- 2 Co. Rd # 9
- Δ 3 Storlie's
- Δ 4 Bronde's
- 5 Nikko Bridge
- 6 Co. Rd # 4