



Crescent Lake/North Platte National Wildlife Refuge Complex
115 Railway Street, Suite C109
Scottsbluff, NE 69363



Compatibility Determination

Station Name: Crescent Lake National Wildlife Refuge

Date Established: 1931

Establishing and Acquisition Authorities: Executive Order No. 5579 of March 16, 1931

Purposes for which Refuge was established: " ...reserved and set apartas a refuge and breeding ground for birds and wild animals."

"..... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds"
16 USC § 715D (Migratory Bird Conservation Act)

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission: The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System is "to administer a national network of lands for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans."

Description of Proposed Use: Hunting

Hunting is currently allowed on the Refuge for deer (whitetail and mule deer) and upland birds (pheasant and grouse). Hunting is second in popularity of refuge public uses only to fishing. The opening of deer season is the highest public use day on the Refuge. The Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) was approved in 2002 and proposed to continue the present hunting uses and add waterfowl hunting. The CCP also proposed to limit peak deer hunter numbers to not more than 150 hunters per day.

The Hunting Plan is a step down plan to the CCP. The Hunting Plan proposes to continue deer, pheasant and grouse hunting. The plan proposes to open waterfowl hunting in the area located in the vicinity of Island, Christ, Crane and Shafer Lakes within the boundaries defined on the west by the closed area, to the south and north by the refuge boundary, and to the east by the wilderness area boundary. Coyote, furbearer, and rabbit hunting will be open during daylight hours only.

Availability of Resources:

Resources are currently available for the hunting program as defined in the Hunting Plan. To add these new uses will require updating the refuge brochures and some signs, and a limited amount of additional law enforcement since the season will be concurrent with existing seasons.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use:

Hunting removes individual animals from the population and causes some wildlife disturbance. This disturbance is limited to fall and winter months when most wildlife have completed critical life

processes. State and federal game harvest regulations are in effect to assure perpetual populations of game animals and to prevent populations from reaching unreasonable numbers resulting in die offs or nuisance problems.

Justification:

Based on biological impacts described in the CCP and Environmental Assessment it is determined that recreational hunting within the refuge will not materially interfere with or detract from the purposes for which the refuge was established. Further, hunting has been identified as a priority public use in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 when this activity is compatible with the refuge purpose.

Determination:

Hunting as described in the Crescent Lake Hunting Plan is **compatible**.

Stipulations to ensure compatibility:

*The present closed area to remain in effect to provide wildlife viewing opportunity even during open seasons.

*Limit peak numbers of deer hunters to a maximum of 150 on any given day. Reaching this limit is probably well into the future, but it will ensure that the basic quality of solitude will not be severely compromised.

*Having the Refuge only open to hunting from September 1 through January 31. This will concentrate hunting within a given time period and minimize conflicts with other Refuge uses and management activities.

*Hunting may only be done during daylight hours, even for those species that are normally hunted at night. This will keep hunting in line with other Refuge uses and within the regulations that the Refuge is closed to public use at night.

Signatures:

Project Leader: Brodie W. McKinney, acting Date 12-19-03

Concurrence: Rebecca T. King Date 12/22/03
Refuge Supervisor

Richard A. Coleman Date 12/30/03
Regional Chief
National Wildlife Refuge System