

Amendment #2 to the
Hunting and Fishing Plan
Mingo National Wildlife Refuge
Title: Spring Firearm Turkey Hunting

I. Amendment

The wild turkey, Meleagris gallopavo is presently hunted on the Mingo National Wildlife Refuge during the Missouri fall archery turkey season. This amendment proposes to expand the turkey hunting program to include the Missouri Spring Firearm turkey season.

II. Program Relation to Refuge Objectives

The refuge presently allows archery deer, archery turkey and squirrel hunting on 6,500 acres, and waterfowl hunting on 2,000 acres. The two resident game hunting programs for squirrel and deer provided approximately 32,454 activity hours of hunting recreation in FY-80. Waterfowl hunting provided an additional 1,194 hours for a total of 33,698 activity hours. The FY-83 objective level for the hunting recreation output category is 36,000 activity hours.

The availability of spring turkey hunting on the refuge would bring the hunting recreation output category up to the objective level. The proposal would be implemented entirely within the existing hunting program framework and authority. It would not adversely impact any other refuge program or objective.

III. Program Policies and Administrative Control

Mingo National Wildlife Refuge is currently authorized under the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 50, to conduct hunting programs for migratory game birds, upland game, and big game. Such hunting is permitted on 6,500 acres of woodland located in the northeastern portion of the refuge (see map in Appendix). All hunting is conducted in accordance with State and Federal regulations. In addition special refuge regulations prescribe hunter access and exit points, parking areas, routes of travel, registration requirements, the use of boats, tree stands, dogs, etc. These regulations define exactly how a species may be hunted and give the refuge control as well as flexibility over the program.

Starting in the spring of 1982, firearm spring turkey hunting would be permitted within the designated hunting area. The program would be conducted within the framework of the refuge policies and controls described above and the State's turkey hunting regulations. The number of hunters will be limited through a registration system to provide quality hunting. Assistance will be available for implementing the new program from the Missouri Department of Conservation through their Duck Creek Wildlife Management Area and local Conservation Agents.

IV. Program Description, Problems, and Solutions

Habitat acres for the main ecological land classification types on the refuge are shown below:

Moist Soil Units	761
Fresh Marshes	4,500
Wooded Swamps	12,500
Rivers and Streams	39
Croplands	701
Grasslands, Introduced	960
Grasslands, Restored	8
Forest Lands	2,003
Administrative Lands	<u>204</u>
Total Acres	21,676

Firearm turkey hunting would be entirely within the wooded swampland habitat category. Justification for adding firearm hunting is based on the following points:

1. Turkey hunting on the refuge was authorized in 1979.
2. The turkey population on the refuge produces an annual harvestable surplus that can be utilized for public recreation. Archery turkey hunting does not fully utilize this surplus.
3. The program will not affect other refuge programs or objectives.
4. The program can be conducted within the framework of the existing hunting program.
5. Public approval of the new program will be substantial and improve refuge public relations.

The overall benefit of including firearm turkey hunting in the refuge hunting program would be to provide additional hunting opportunities to the public and bring refuge hunting activity outputs up to the desired objective level.

Public reaction to a firearm turkey season would be favorable and improve public relations. During the period when turkey numbers were low, the public supported the refuge's no hunting policy. The buildup of a large stable turkey population allowed the refuge to initiate a fall archery turkey season in 1979. Response from the public to this hunting program was favorable and no problems resulted from the program. However, the difficulty of harvesting turkey with a bow during the archery deer season was shown by the low numbers (6 in 1979; 6 in 1980) of turkey killed during the first two years of the program.

The addition of firearm hunting during the spring would be the logical complement to the existing program to utilize this renewable resource.

V. Program Units

Spring firearm turkey hunting would be permitted on 6,500 acres of bottomland hardwoods in the northeast portion of the refuge. This area is located adjacent to the Duck Creek Wildlife Management Area which is currently open to firearm turkey hunting.

The spring turkey population for this area is estimated at 100 or approximately one turkey per 65 acres. This figure will vary with the movements of turkeys in and out of the area from other portions of the refuge.

The management objective for the area open to hunting is to preserve it as a natural bottomland ecosystem. The natural productivity of the area is utilized by migratory waterfowl as well as resident wildlife.

The spring firearm program will be conducted in accordance with the Missouri Department of Conservation's turkey hunting regulations. The administrative policies and controls previously discussed will also apply to the new program. Initially, a registration system and quota system will be used to limit the total number of hunters and provide quality hunting. This system may be dropped or modified as necessary in later years depending on the amount of hunting pressure received and the success of the program.

The quota system will require all hunters to register at the Visitor Center between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. the day before they wish to hunt. The registration sheet (Appendix 2) currently in use for existing hunting programs will be used to record the hunter's name and address. Hunters will be handled on a first come, first serve basis until the quota is reached. However, some restrictions may have to be placed on allowing repeat hunters if the total number of new hunters each day exceeds the quota. Each hunter will be given a dated 3x5" refuge validation card to hunt on the refuge the next day. The card will provide a means to identify properly registered hunters when checked by enforcement personnel in the field. All turkeys killed on the refuge will be required to be tagged in accordance with state regulations at the Visitor Center or at the Duck Creek Wildlife Management Area. Hunters violating any refuge or state regulation will not be permitted to register again for the remainder of the spring turkey season on the refuge.

A quota of 25 hunters per day will be set the first year to provide a ratio of approximately 260 acres per hunter which should provide for hunter safety and quality hunt in accordance with Service guidelines. During a 14 day season such as in 1980, a total of 350 hunters could participate in the hunting program. Based on general data compiled by the Missouri Department of Conservation, an average

harvest of 1.5 turkeys per 650 acres can be expected. At this rate, 15 turkeys would be harvested. However, during the 1980 spring turkey season 20 turkeys were harvested from 3,000 acres on the Duck Creek Wildlife Management Area which was an average of one turkey per 150 acres. Since refuge habitat is very similar to that on Duck Creek, a similar harvest rate would produce 43 turkeys. This harvest would be 43% of the population which is below the normal annual recruitment rate of 40% to 70% for a wild turkey population. If each hunter hunts an average of 3 hours approximately 1,000 activity hours of recreation would be provided.

Thus, the firearm hunting program will provide quality hunting and not affect the turkey population. The overall refuge turkey population is limited by habitat carrying capacity and weather factors, particularly during the spring hatching period and the winter months. Actual hunter success on the refuge will vary from year to year depending on these and other local factors.

VI. Physical Plan and Equipment Use Requirements

The spring firearm turkey hunting program will not require any additional physical facilities. All present sign-in stations, signs, roads, parking areas, foot bridges, and other facilities are adequate for the addition of the firearm turkey program.

VII. Funds and Manpower Requirements

No additional funds or manpower will be required to conduct the firearm turkey program. Present funding for administration and facility maintenance is adequate to incorporate firearm turkey hunting into the existing hunting program framework. Increased enforcement efforts will be required to assure compliance with the program's regulations. This will be accomplished by redirecting some of the present enforcement work done in closed portions of the refuge, and also through closer cooperation with the Missouri Conservation Agents.

At the end of the year, non-specific costs for all hunting programs will be divided proportionally according to the number of hunters that participated in each program.

VIII. Program Data

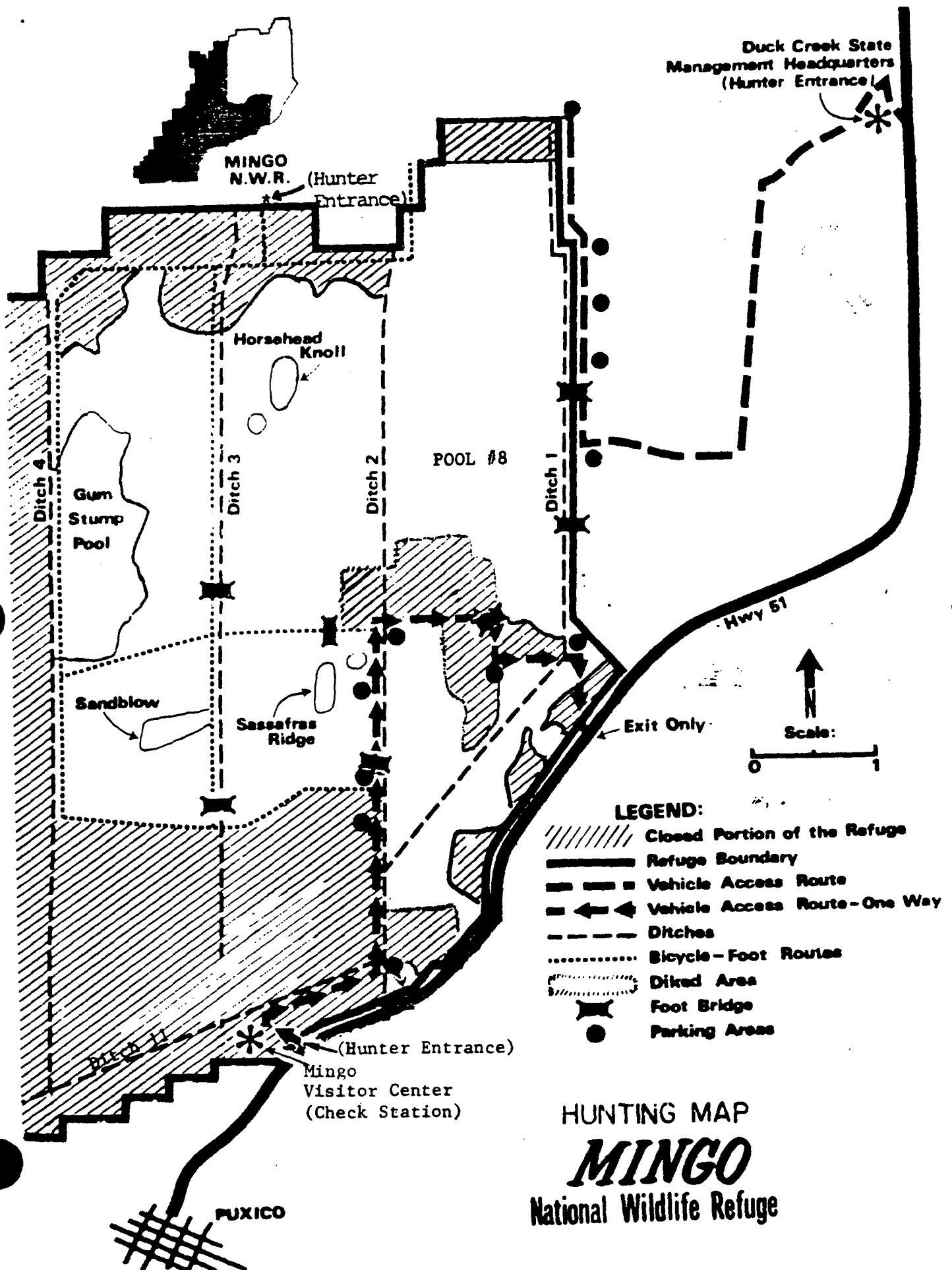
Reference material on hunting opportunities, fish and wildlife usage, etc., are listed in Mingo's Hunting and Fishing Plan.

IX. Appendix

Appendix 1 - Hunting map and current hunting regulations for the Mingo National Wildlife Refuge

Appendix 2 - Sample Hunter Registration Sheet

Appendix 3 - Refuge Hunting Regulations- Spring Firearm Turkey Season



SAMPLE HUNTER REGISTRATION SHEET

Hunter Registration Mingo National Wildlife Refuge			
	Date	Name	Address
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

Refuge Hunting Regulations
Spring Firearm Turkey Season

1. Firearm turkey hunting is permitted in designated areas in accordance with all applicable State and Federal regulations.
2. All turkeys killed on the refuge must be checked in at either the refuge Visitor Center or the Duck Creek Wildlife Management Area.

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Hunting and Fishing Plan
Mingo National Wildlife Refuge

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