

## **Compatibility Determination**

**Use:** Hunting

**Refuge Name:** Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)

### **Establishing and Acquisition Authorities:**

Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, as amended by Public Law 93-271,

### **Refuge Purposes:**

... for the development, advancement, management, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources ... 16 U.S.C. § 742f(a)(4) "... for the benefit of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, in performing its activities and services. Such acceptance may be subject to the terms of any restrictive or affirmative covenant, or condition of servitude ..." 16 U.S.C. § 742f(b)(1) (Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956)

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

**Description of Use:** Allow refuge visitors to hunt certain wildlife species.

### **Is the use a priority public use?**

Hunting is a priority public use of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Hunting was originally opened on Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR in the 2003-2004 season and is conducted in accordance with the Refuge Hunting Plan (2011).

### **Where would the use be conducted?**

The hunting of certain species is an existing use that occurs on designated areas of the Refuge. Hunting is allowed on most fee title units of the refuge. The Service does not administer or regulate hunting on the conservation easements that are part of the refuge. The easements are privately owned lands and hunting activities are administered by the landowners.

### **When would the use be conducted?**

Season dates for authorized species are consistent with Minnesota and Iowa State regulations, except when more restrictive Refuge regulations apply. Specific dates for hunting seasons vary annually. The following table show the dates for the 2010-2011 seasons.

**Table 2 : IOWA HUNTING INFORMATION 2010-2011**

Deer Hunting				
Season		Season Dates		
Youth Season		Sept. 18- Oct.3		
Disable Hunter Season		Sept. 18 - Oct. 3		
Archery Season-Early Split		Oct. 1 - Dec. 3		
Archery Season-Late Split		Dec. 20 - Jan. 10, 2011		
Early Muzzleloader		Oct. 16-24 - 22		
Late Muzzleloader		Dec. 20 - Jan. 10, 2011		
Shotgun-Season 1		Dec. 4-8		
Shotgun-Season 2		Dec. 11-19		
November Antlerless Season		Nov. 26-28		
January Antlerless Season		Jan. 11 - Jan.30, 2011		
Nonresident Holiday Season		Dec. 24 - Jan. 2, 2011		
Turkey Hunting				
Season		Type of License	Season Dates	
Fall Season		Combination Gun/Bow	Oct. 11- Dec. 3, 2010	
Fall Archery		Archery Only	Oct. 1-Dec. 3 and Dec. 20-Jan. 10, 2011	
Youth Season (Residents Only)		Combination Gun/Bow	April 8-10, 2011	
Season 1		Combination Gun/Bow	April 11-14, 2011	
Season 2		Combination Gun/Bow	April 15-19, 2011	
Season 3		Combination Gun/Bow	April 20-26, 2011	
Season 4		Combination Gun/Bow	April 27 - May 15, 2011	
Season 1 - 4		Resident Archery-Only	April 11-May 15, 2011	
Upland Game Hunting			Furbearer Hunting	
Species	Season	Species	Season	
Youth Rooster Pheasant	Oct. 23-24	Coyote	Continuous Open Season	
Rooster Pheasant	Oct. 30 - Jan. 10, 2011	Raccoon, Opossum, Badger, Striped skunk	Nov. 6 - Jan. 31, 2011	
Bobwhite Quail	Oct. 30 - Jan. 31, 2010	Fox (Red and Gray)	Nov. 6 - Jan. 31, 2011	
Gray Partridge	Oct. 9 - Jan. 31, 2011			
Rabbit (Cottontail)	Sept. 4 - Feb. 28, 2011			
Rabbit (Jack)	Oct. 30 - Dec. 1			
Squirrel (Fox and Gray)	Sept.4 - Jan. 31, 2011			
Groundhog	June 15 - Oct. 31			
Crow	Oct. 15 - Nov. 30 and Jan. 14 - March 31, 2011			
Migratory Game Bird Hunting				
Species	Season (North Duck Zone)		Season (South Duck Zone)	
Ducks, Mergansers, Coots	Sept. 18 - 22 and Oct. 16 - Dec. 9		Sept. 18-22 and Oct. 23 - Dec. 16	
Youth Waterfowl Hunting Days	Oct. 2-3		Oct. 9-10	
Species	Season (North Goose Zone)		Season (South Goose Zone)	
Canada geese and brant	Sept. 25- Oct. 10 and Oct. 16-Jan. 5, 2011		Oct. 2 -17 and Oct. 23-Jan. 12, 2011	
White-fronted geese	Sept. 25-Dec. 5		Oct. 2- Dec. 12	
Light geese (white and blue phase snow geese and Ross' geese)	Sept. 25 - Jan. 9, 2011		Oct. 2- Jan. 14, 2011	
Special September Canada Goose Seasons				
Canada geese		Sept. 4 - 12 (Only in designated zones around Des Moines, Cedar Rapids/Iowa City and Cedar Falls/Waterloo. Special regulations apply. See Special September Canada Goose Season flyer at select license agents in hunt zones).		
Statewide				
Species	Season			
Light geese Conservation Order (white and blue phase snow geese and Ross' geese)	Jan. 15 - April 15, 2011 (Additional Regulations May Apply)			
Woodcock	Oct. 2 - Nov. 15			
Snipe	Sept. 4 - Nov. 30			
Rail (Sora and Virginia)	Sept. 4 - Nov. 12			

**Table 3 : MINNESOTA HUNTING INFORMATION 2010-2011**

Deer Hunting.			
Season		Zone	Season Dates
Firearm		200	Nov. 6 – 14
Muzzleloader		Statewide (except closed areas)	Nov. 27 – Dec. 12
Archery		Statewide (except closed areas)	Sept. 18– Dec. 31
Turkey Hunting			
Season		Season Dates	
Fall Season I		Oct. 2-31	
Spring Season I		April 13 - May 26, 2011	
Upland Game Hunting		Furbearer Hunting	
Species	Season	Species	Season
Pheasant	Oct. 16 – Jan. 2, 2011	Raccoon and Red Fox	Oct. 23 – Mar. 15, 2011
Ruffed Grouse	Sept. 18 – Jan. 2, 2011	Badger, Opossum	Oct. 23 – Mar. 15, 2011
Sharp-tailed Grouse (in open zone)	Sept. 18 – Nov. 30	Gray Fox	Oct. 23 – Mar. 15, 2011
Hungarian Partridge	Sept. 18 – Jan. 2, 2011	Coyote, striped skunk, and other unprotected species	Continuous
Prairie Chicken (by special permit only)	Oct. 23 – 27		
Rabbit (Cottontail, Jack, Snowshoe Hare)	Sept. 18 – Feb. 28, 2011		
Squirrel (Fox and Gray)	Sept. 18 – Feb. 28, 2011		
Non-Migratory Small Game by Falconry	Sept. 1 – Feb. 28, 2011		
Migratory Game Bird Hunting			
Ducks, Coots, Mergansers, Moorhens (Gallinules)	Oct. 2 – Nov.30		
Mourning Doves	Sept. 1 – Oct. 30		
Woodcock	Sept. 25 – Nov. 8		
Sora and Virginia Rail	Sept. 1 – Nov. 8		
Common Snipe (Wilson's or Jacksnipe)	Sept. 1 – Nov. 8		
Crow	March 1-31 and July 15-Oct. 15		
Geese (Snow, Blue, and Ross')	Oct. 2- Dec. 25		
White-fronted and Brant geese	Oct. 2 –Dec. 25		
Canada geese			
Statewide (except Rochester zone)	Oct. 2- Dec. 25		
September Season	Sept. 4 -22		

**How would the use be conducted?**

Bag limits and harvest methods for authorized species are consistent with Minnesota and Iowa State regulations, except when more restrictive Refuge regulations apply. Hunting is allowed for the species listed in the table below.

**Table 1: Hunted Species by State**

<b>Species Hunted</b>	<b>Iowa</b>	<b>Minnesota</b>
White-tailed deer	X	X
Wild Turkey	X	X
Ring-necked pheasant	X	X
Gray (Hungarian) partridge	X	X
Ruffed grouse		X
Sharp-tailed grouse		X
Prairie chicken		X
Bobwhite quail	X	
Rabbit (cottontail and white-tailed jack)	X	X
Snowshoe hare		X
Squirrel (fox and gray)	X	X
Groundhog	X	
Raccoon	X	X
Opossum	X	X
Fox (red and gray)	X	X
Badger	X	X
Coyote	X	X
Striped skunk	X	X
Crow	X	X
Ducks and geese	X	X
Common Moorhen (Gallinule)		X
Coots	X	X
Rails (Virginia and sora)	X	X
Common snipe	X	X
Mourning Dove		X

**Why is this use being proposed?**

Hunting is a priority general public use of the Refuge System that is also an important wildlife management tool. The Service recognizes hunting as a healthy, traditional outdoor pastime, deeply rooted in the American heritage (USFWS 2006). Hunting can instill a unique understanding and appreciation of wildlife, their behavior, and their habitat needs. Hunting programs can promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on lands and waters in the Refuge System. Public hunting opportunities are also available nearby on federal Waterfowl Production Areas and Wildlife Management Area administered by the Minnesota (MNDNR) and Iowa (IADNR) Departments of Natural Resources.

**Availability of Resources:****What resources are needed to properly (considering quality and compatibility) and safely administer use?**

The present Refuge hunting program is designed to be administered with minimal Refuge resources. Refuge regulations mirror State regulations in large part which allows the MNDNR and IADNR Conservation Officers to assist in law enforcement. There is a small amount of road maintenance, mowing, and other upkeep performed that is funded as part of regular Refuge management activities.

**Are existing refuge resources adequate to properly and safely administer the use?**

At the present level of hunting use there are adequate Refuge resources to implement the hunting program. Law enforcement is the primary tool necessary to ensure proper and safe administration of this use. Law enforcement services are available through the Regional Law Enforcement Program and Refuge Officers stationed at other refuges and Wetland Management District Offices located near these units. Additionally, the local State Conservation Officers and County Sheriff's Office provide additional assistance when requested.

**Anticipated Impacts of the Use:**

**How does hunting affect Refuge purposes and the NWRS mission?**

The Refuge was established to conserve, manage, maintain and protect wildlife resources and their habitat. Hunting does not adversely affect the ability of the Refuge to fulfill this purpose. National Wildlife Refuges are managed first and foremost for wildlife (USFWS 2001). But the focus is on wildlife populations not individuals (USFWS 1992). Hunting causes mortality and wounding of individual animals, but is regulated so it does not threaten the perpetuation of wildlife populations. The effects of hunting on wildlife populations are monitored within the State and across the nation and are considered in setting annual hunting bag limits. Hunting is a priority public use of the Refuge System and allowing hunting on the Refuge helps fulfill the System mission.

**How does hunting affect Fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats; and the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the refuge/NWRS?**

Resident Game Species

MNDNR and IADNR annually reviews hunting seasons and bag limits and modifies them to avoid any long-term population declines. Hunting is not expected to adversely impact game populations.

Disturbance

In *Managing Visitor Use and Disturbance of Waterbirds: A Literature Review of Impacts and Mitigations* DeLong (2002) includes a summary of effects on wildlife from disturbance from hunting and other forms of recreation. The author documents that disturbance can alter behavior (e.g. foraging time), population structure, and distribution patterns of wildlife. It is probable that hunting would cause some or all of these effects to some degree on Refuge wildlife. A number of measures mitigate these effects, including closing an area to hunting is conflicts cannot be mitigated. Hunting seasons occur outside the times when most wildlife species are raising offspring and are most sensitive to disturbance. Motor vehicle use is limited to designated road and parking areas that were designed in a manner that effectively reduces disturbance to wildlife. Hunting activity is fairly small due to the limited acreage associated with this refuge. Although hunting pressure may increase slightly over time, it is expected that wildlife disturbance will remain at acceptable levels.

Habitat

Hunting is not expected to adversely affect Refuge habitat.

### **Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health**

Hunting conducted in accordance with State and Federal regulations is not expected to adversely affect wildlife populations that occur on the Refuge and likely assists in maintaining the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge. Some species, such as white-tailed deer, today occur at levels well above those thought to occur under historic conditions. Left unchecked high numbers of such species could adversely affect biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health. Hunting is a closely monitored tool that helps regulate wildlife populations.

### **Other Uses and Public Safety**

Hunting is not expected to adversely affect other Refuge uses or public safety. Dogs are permitted for hunting for retrieving and trailing. At present levels of use dogs used for these purposes are not expected to adversely impact non-target species or conflict with other uses. If public use levels on Big Stone NWR expand across time, unanticipated conflicts between user groups may occur. The Refuge's Visitor Services programs would be adjusted as needed to eliminate or minimize each problem and provide quality wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities which includes promoting public safety. Experience on many National Wildlife Refuges has proven that time and space zoning (e.g., establishment of separate use areas, use periods, and restrictions on the number of users) is an effective tool in eliminating conflicts between user groups. Overall, the cumulative impacts of hunting on other wildlife-dependent recreation or public safety at Northern Tallgrass Prairie NWR are expected to be minor.

### **Public Review and Comment:**

This compatibility determination is part of an updated Hunt Plan and Environmental Assessment (EA). Public notification and review for the Hunt Plan and EA included a 30-day comment period and local media announcements. No comments on the Hunt Plan or EA were received.

### **Determination:**

Hunting

☐ Use is Not Compatible

☒ Use is Compatible with the Following Stipulations

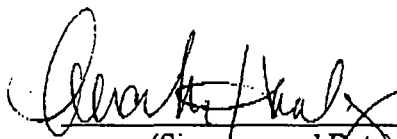
### **Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:**

1. Hunting must be conducted according to State, Federal, and Refuge specific regulations.
2. Hunting may be more restrictive than State seasons and regulations to ensure compliance with visitor safety and to reduce wildlife disturbance.
3. Hunting is prohibited within identified areas.
4. Motor vehicles access is limited to designated roads and parking areas.
5. The use of snowmobiles and all terrain and utility terrain vehicles (ATV/UTV) are prohibited.
6. The construction or use of permanent binds, stands or scaffolds is prohibited.

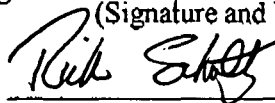
7. All personal property, including but not limited to stands, temporary blinds, platforms, and ladders must be removed at the end of each day's hunt.

**Justification:**

**Signature:** Refuge Manager

 1/24/11  
(Signature and Date)

**Concurrence:** Regional Chief

 1/27/11  
(Signature and Date)

**Mandatory 10- or 15-year Re-Evaluation Date:** January 2026

DeLong, A. K. 2002. Managing visitor use and disturbance of waterbirds — a literature review of impacts and mitigation measures — prepared for Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge. Appendix L (114 pp.) in Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Complex final environmental impact statement for the comprehensive conservation plan and boundary revision (Vol. II). Dept. of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1, Portland, OR. Available URL:  
<http://www.fws.gov/stillwater/litreview.pdf>

Northern Tallgrass Prairie National Wildlife Refuge Hunting Plan. 2011.

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1995. Migratory Game Bird Hunting: Regulations Development Process. 723 FW 3. Department of Interior. Available URL:  
<http://www.fws.gov/policy/723fw3.html>

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<http://www.fws.gov/policy/701fw1.html>

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2001. Biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health. 601 FW 3. National Wildlife Refuge System, Department of Interior. Available URL: <http://policy.fws.gov/601fw3.html>

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2006. Wildlife-Dependent Recreation: Hunting. 605 FW 2. National Wildlife Refuge System, Department of Interior. Available URL:  
<http://www.fws.gov/policy/605fw2.html>