

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE REFUGE MANAGEMENT

1.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? The guidance in this chapter, in conjunction with 605 FW 2-7, provides Service policies, strategies, and requirements concerning the management of wildlife-dependent recreation programs within the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). 605 FW 2-7 focus on personal wildlife-dependent recreation; therefore, we will not address economic uses (5 RM 17, Exhibit 1) in these chapters. We cover allowed specialized uses in 5 RM 17.

1.2 What is the Refuge System's wildlife-dependent recreation policy?

A. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 states that "compatible wildlife-dependent recreation is a legitimate and appropriate general public use of the System." The overarching goal of our wildlife-dependent recreation policy is to enhance wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities and access to quality visitor experiences on refuges while managing refuges to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats. New and ongoing recreational uses should help visitors focus on wildlife and other natural resources. These uses should provide an opportunity to make visitors aware of resource issues, management plans, and how the refuge contributes to the Refuge System and Service mission. Thus, we only allow wildlife-dependent recreation on a refuge after we first determine that it is compatible (603 FW 2). In addition, we manage wildlife-dependent recreation in strict accordance with all applicable Federal laws and, to the extent practicable, consistent with applicable State and tribal laws (Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 50 subchapter C).

B. Refuge managers will work with State fish and wildlife agencies to develop and implement quality wildlife-dependent recreation programs on refuges. The policy in this chapter applies to all wildlife-dependent recreation programs that occur in the Refuge System. In some instances, it does not apply to lands acquired as waterfowl production areas. Waterfowl production areas are open to migratory game bird, upland game, and big game hunting and sport fishing subject to the provisions of State laws and regulations (see 50 CFR 32.1 and 32.4). The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Improvement Act), which amended the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (Administration Act), defines wildlife-dependent recreation as a use of a refuge involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We may allow other activities on refuges, such as camping, to facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. Refuge managers must comply with the appropriate refuge uses policy (603 FW 1) and the compatibility policy (603 FW 2). Our general policy is to provide a broad spectrum of visitors with quality wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities. To accomplish this policy, we ensure consistency and professionalism in planning and implementing wildlife-dependent recreation programs in the Refuge System.

C. Prior to opening a refuge to new wildlife-dependent recreational uses, the refuge manager will develop and follow an approved visitor services plan (VSP) and tailor programs to the refuge and its ability to administer the proposed wildlife-dependent recreational uses. While new VSPs are being prepared, we do not close ongoing refuge hunting and fishing programs. In developing an approved plan, the refuge manager should consult legislation or other documents that identify the purpose(s) for which the refuge was established and any mandated uses, approved Regional and California/Nevada Operations Office (CNO) or other large-scale management plans, the refuge's comprehensive conservation plan (CCP), and any applicable step-down management plans. In addition, the refuge manager should review any applicable State fish and wildlife management plans.

D. Refuge managers should also tailor wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities to take into account legal commitments and, to the extent practicable, visitor interest, community traditions and viewpoints, constraints of the location, and refuge resources, while recognizing that wildlife conservation is the first priority of the Refuge System. Refuge managers should consider the visitor demand for an activity and keep an eye out for future changes in that demand.

1.3 Under what authorities do we manage wildlife-dependent recreation in the Refuge System? The following laws and Executive orders (E.O.) govern wildlife-dependent recreation in the Refuge System:

A. Laws

- (1) Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (16 U.S.C. 410hh-410hh-5, 460mm-460mm-4, 539-539e, and 3101-3233; 43 U.S.C. 1631 et seq.);
- (2) Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (43 U.S.C. 1601-1624);
- (3) Antiquities Act of 1906 (16 U.S.C. 431-433);
- (4) Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 (16 U.S.C. 470aa-470mm);
- (5) Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544), as amended;
- (6) Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-754j), as amended;
- (7) Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 2901-2911), as amended;
- (8) Fish and Wildlife Improvement Act of 1978 (16 U.S.C. 742l);
- (9) Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (16 U.S.C. 4601-4601-11), as amended;
- (10) Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. 703-712), as amended;
- (11) Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 (16 U.S.C. 715a-715r);
- (12) National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), as amended;
- (13) National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 (16 U.S.C. 742f);
- (14) Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 460k-460k-4), as amended;
- (15) Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (16 U.S.C. 1271-1287), as amended;
- (16) Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131-1136);
- (17) National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4321-4347), as amended; and
- (18) Refuge-specific authorities.

B. Executive Orders

- (1) 11593 - Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment;
- (2) 11644 - Use of Off-road Vehicles on the Public Lands;
- (3) 12996 - Management and General Public Use of the National Wildlife Refuge System;
- (4) 13007 - Indian Sacred Sites; and
- (5) 12962 - Recreational Fisheries.

1.4 What are our responsibilities for developing wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities?

A. Director. Provides national policy on visitor services programs, including wildlife-dependent recreation, that comply with all applicable laws and authorities.

B. Assistant Director, National Wildlife Refuge System.

- (1) Ensures development and completion of national policy on wildlife-dependent recreation programs for the Director's approval;
- (2) Ensures distribution of national policy on wildlife-dependent recreation programs to Regional chiefs/CNO Assistant Manager and refuges;
- (3) Provides national oversight and consistency when reviewing and managing all proposed and implemented wildlife-dependent recreation programs; and
- (4) Approves a visitor services requirements handbook.

C. Regional Director/CNO Manager.

- (1) Provides Regional/CNO policy, when necessary, consistent with national wildlife-dependent recreation policy;
- (2) When reviewing and approving compatible wildlife-dependent recreation programs, ensures the Regional chief/CNO Assistant Manager follows applicable laws, regulations, and policies;
- (3) Determines the extent of authority over recreational uses on easement refuges; and
- (4) Reviews and signs documentation for opening packages for new or expanded hunting and fishing programs.

D. Regional Chief/CNO Assistant Manager, National Wildlife Refuge System.

- (1) Approves VSPs and any major amendments to them;
- (2) Ensures Regional/CNO consistency among wildlife-dependent recreation programs;
- (3) When reviewing wildlife-dependent recreation programs, ensures refuge supervisors follow laws, regulations, and policies;
- (4) Ensures that refuge supervisors work with and provide guidance to refuge managers in preparing VSPs; and
- (5) Submits signed copies of opening packages to the Refuges Federal Register liaison in Headquarters (see 605 FW 2.9 for more information about opening packages.)

E. Regional/CNO Visitor Services Chief

- (1) Interprets national policy and guidance at the Regional/CNO level;
- (2) Provides visitor services related guidance and direction to the field;
- (3) Participates and advises field stations in planning processes, including CCPs; and
- (4) Participates in visitor services requirements reviews at field stations.

F. Refuge Supervisor.

- (1) Reviews VSPs and any major amendments to them;
- (2) Ensures consistency among wildlife-dependent recreation programs under his/her supervision; and
- (3) When starting, managing, and reviewing wildlife-dependent recreation programs, ensures the refuge manager follows applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

G. Refuge Manager.

- (1) Requests participation by State fish and wildlife management agencies on VSP development, regulations, and issues;
- (2) Determines if wildlife-dependent recreation is compatible with refuge purpose(s);
- (3) Prepares the VSP;
- (4) Ensures appropriate public involvement in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process;
- (5) Reviews VSP and wildlife-dependent recreation programs annually; and
- (6) Approves minor revisions to VSP.

1.5 What do these terms mean?

A. Access. Reasonable availability of and opportunity to participate in quality wildlife-dependent recreation.

B. Mandated Use. Any use identified and/or described in legislation by Congress or in an Executive order. These uses may or may not be wildlife-dependent.

C. Other Recreational Use. A recreational use of the Refuge System that is not one of the six wildlife-dependent recreational uses and which may only be allowed if it is both appropriate and compatible.

D. Public Use. Any use of the Refuge System by the public, including, but not limited to, wildlife-dependent recreation and other appropriate uses.

E. Visitor Services. Any program provided by the Service that is specifically or predominately designed for the participation or benefit of visitors.

F. Visitor Services Plan (VSP). A management plan containing specific strategies formulated to meet the visitor services goals and objectives of the refuge's CCP that integrates wildlife-dependent and other recreational uses on a refuge or group of refuges.

G. Wildlife. The terms "fish," "wildlife," and "fish and wildlife" mean any wild member of the animal kingdom, whether alive or dead, and regardless of whether it was bred, hatched, or born in captivity, including its parts, products, eggs, or offspring.

H. Wildlife-Dependent Recreational Use and Wildlife-Dependent Recreation. The Improvement Act defines this as a use of a refuge involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, or environmental education and interpretation. Compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses are the priority general public uses of the Refuge System.

1.6 How do we develop and evaluate quality wildlife-dependent recreation programs? The Refuge System provides a unique opportunity to ensure that we approach our compatible wildlife-dependent recreation programs from the perspective of the Refuge System mission and goals. We believe wildlife-dependent recreation that comports well with the following criteria will continue to meet the needs and desires of refuge visitors. To ensure continued visitor satisfaction with our wildlife-dependent recreation programs, we incorporate public input using visitor satisfaction surveys or other instruments, including input during the development of a CCP or VSP, that help us define and evaluate wildlife-dependent recreation programs at each refuge. We develop our wildlife-dependent recreation programs in consultation with State fish and wildlife agencies and stakeholder input based on the following criteria:

- A. Promotes safety of participants, other visitors, and facilities;
- B. Promotes compliance with applicable laws and regulations and responsible behavior;
- C. Minimizes or eliminates conflict with fish and wildlife population or habitat goals or objectives in an approved plan;

- D. Minimizes or eliminates conflicts with other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation;
- E. Minimizes conflicts with neighboring landowners;
- F. Promotes accessibility and availability to a broad spectrum of the American people;
- G. Promotes resource stewardship and conservation;
- H. Promotes public understanding and increases public appreciation of America's natural resources and our role in managing and conserving these resources;
- I. Provides reliable/reasonable opportunities to experience wildlife;
- J. Uses facilities that are accessible to people and blend into the natural setting; and
- K. Uses visitor satisfaction to help define and evaluate programs.

1.7 How do we use wildlife-dependent recreation programs to build public support for our mission? We promote the Refuge System mission through strong national and local communication, consistent outreach, wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, and special events that showcase the Refuge System's roles in conservation efforts. We also use these means to increase the public's understanding and appreciation for conservation and natural resources and expose a broader spectrum of the public to the enjoyment of natural resources. We encourage refuge managers to host special events and seek local media coverage for National Wildlife Refuge Week, International Migratory Bird Day, National Hunting and Fishing Day, Youth Hunting Days, National Fishing Week, hunts for individuals with disabilities, and celebrations of refuge anniversaries, where appropriate. We also encourage refuge managers to look for ways to introduce new sectors of the public to the Refuge System during these celebrations. By reaching out to new sectors, we lay the foundation to expand support for the Refuge System, understanding of wildlife conservation and management, and participation in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation.

1.8 What are some of the tools we use to help us implement and manage wildlife-dependent recreation programs? Refuge managers develop, implement, and manage wildlife-dependent recreation programs on refuges by various means. These include, but are not limited to, coordinating with Federal, State, tribal, and local government agencies; fostering successful refuge support and Friends groups; building successful volunteer programs; implementing user fee programs; conducting educational, informational, or coordination meetings; highlighting refuge attributes through exhibits and brochures; participating in local celebrations; hiring staff; training personnel; registering users; and issuing special use permits. We determine overall effectiveness of the programs by evaluating factors such as improved resource protection, the success of refuge support groups, the quality of the visitor's experience, and visitor compliance with refuge-specific rules and regulations. We will successfully administer compatible wildlife-dependent recreation programs through:

A. Planning. Refuge managers evaluate the effects of proposed wildlife-dependent recreation programs on wildlife and habitat resources prior to allowing the use to occur in the Refuge System. Refuge managers follow the requirements of the compatibility policy (603 FW 2), NEPA, the Administration Act, as amended, and seek input from other Federal, State, tribal, and local government agencies as well as other interested individuals and organizations throughout the evaluation and planning process. Refuge managers are responsible for developing a VSP (Exhibit 1).

B. Monitoring.

(1) Refuge managers monitor and evaluate wildlife-dependent recreation programs on a regular basis. Refuge managers and staff, with help and support from Regional/CNO offices and the public, periodically review wildlife-dependent recreation programs to ensure that the refuge is meeting its resource management objectives and that we offer quality experiences. Through successful monitoring, we can evaluate and adaptively manage to meet established standards (see sections 1.13B. and 1.14) and ensure that quality activities continue to be compatible.

(2) Regional/CNO offices lead formal station evaluations. At a minimum, the refuge manager, a refuge biologist, and a refuge visitor services specialist participate in the evaluation process. We prefer to conduct these reviews prior to the CCP process so we can use information obtained in the analysis in the development of the CCP. The Regional/CNO evaluations not only focus on the specific goals and objectives for the individual refuge unit, but also examine programs in more detail to ensure that we communicate consistent messages to all visitors throughout the

Region/CNO and the Refuge System. Regional/CNO visitor services chiefs ensure that we deliver messages consistent with current laws, regulations, and policies, and they provide guidance if changes are necessary. By conducting these reviews, we improve and update messages, revitalize programs, and address changing priorities, thus providing our visitors with quality experiences. In addition, visitor services professionals are afforded an opportunity to discuss new techniques with their peers.

C. Resolving visitor conflicts. The Improvement Act directs us to facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. However, increased visitation to refuges may cause conflicts between uses and create unavoidable wildlife disturbance. To ensure uses remain compatible, refuge managers may establish use limits and/or zones for specific activities, disperse or restrict use, or use other means to minimize or eliminate conflict between uses on refuges. We ensure that other recreational uses, if allowed, do not interfere with or diminish the opportunity for, or quality of, compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. We will coordinate proposed use limits and/or zones that may affect refuge hunting or fishing programs with State fish and wildlife agencies (additional considerations addressed by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) apply to the management of public uses on Alaska refuges). Through the use of zones or the establishment of acceptable limits, we can generally provide a balanced visitor program and avoid favoring one wildlife-dependent recreational use over another when both are compatible. We recognize, however, that some refuges cannot support wildlife-dependent recreation or can support only limited wildlife-dependent recreation and that we cannot accommodate every wildlife-dependent recreational use on every refuge. The refuge manager determines which uses to allow when conflicts exist between compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses. The CCP, or the VSP, addresses user conflicts using our criteria for quality programs (section 1.6) and stakeholder input.

D. Nonemergency and emergency closure and protection of sensitive areas and sacred sites. The refuge manager, in consultation with State fish and wildlife agencies, may close all or any part of a refuge that we have opened to wildlife-dependent recreation whenever necessary to conserve or protect the biological or cultural resources of the area or in the event of an emergency endangering human life or safety, property, or any population of fish, wildlife, plant resources, and their habitats (50 CFR 25.21).

(1) Nonemergency closure. During nonemergency closures affecting hunting or fishing programs, we will work with State fish and wildlife agencies and notify stakeholders. We will evaluate the impacts of the decisions using the NEPA process and give appropriate notification to the public. In Alaska, temporary closures or restrictions relating to the taking of fish and wildlife will not be effective prior to public notice and a hearing in the vicinity of the area(s) affected by such closures or restriction and may not exceed 12 months (50 CFR 36.42).

(2) Emergency closure. We do not require advance consultation with State fish and wildlife agencies or public notice for closure under emergency conditions. We will notify visitors of such closures by signs, special maps, or other appropriate methods (50 CFR 25.31).

(3) Protection of sensitive areas. Refuge managers protect sensitive refuge biological or cultural sites. Closures of these sites may be permanent or seasonal, such as when protecting endangered species nests, breeding areas, or bat caves. Cultural sites, such as Native American middens, may be protected through closure and such other means as nondisclosure of their location. Refuge managers also accommodate the protection of, access to, and ceremonial use of sacred sites by religious practitioners of recognized native American tribes and native Hawaiians in accordance to E.O. 13007. Refuge managers, with help from their Regional/CNO cultural resource staff, must familiarize themselves with E.O. 13007, which clarifies and highlights procedures to execute this policy. Refuge managers ensure the physical integrity of the sites, including maintaining appropriate location confidentiality. They may use formal agreements to outline the responsibilities of all parties involved in implementing the order.

1.9 What are the general guidelines we use to help us administer wildlife-dependent recreation programs in the Refuge System? Compatible hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and wildlife photography, and environmental education and interpretation are the priority general public uses of the Refuge System. Refuge managers should facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities that provide visitors with quality experiences. The refuge manager analyzes the effects of the wildlife-dependent recreation and should, unless there is a valid reason not to, provide for those uses determined to be compatible. If we determine that a refuge can support one or more of these uses, compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses should receive preferential consideration in refuge planning and management before the refuge manager analyzes other appropriate and compatible recreational opportunities. These uses provide opportunities for visitors to become interested in and enjoy quality wildlife/outdoor experiences and potentially learn about, understand, and support resource management programs. Refuge managers should work cooperatively with State fish and wildlife agencies and explore partnerships with other Federal, State, tribal, and local

agencies to enhance compatible wildlife-dependent recreation programs. Refuge managers should look for ways to encourage compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. However, if little or no demand exists for a compatible wildlife-dependent recreational use, we do not require refuge managers to provide that use. The following general guidelines apply to wildlife-dependent recreation throughout the Refuge System:

A. Supportive Recreational Uses. We may allow other activities on refuges, such as camping, to facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation. Refuge managers must comply with the chapters on appropriate refuge uses (603 FW 1) and compatibility (603 FW 2).

B. Hours of Use. Although we generally close refuges at night, we may, on occasion, allow activities to occur on a refuge at night if they are appropriate and compatible with refuge purpose(s) and the Refuge System mission. Night fishing is an example of an after-hours use. The refuge manager must consider factors such as the need for increased management and law enforcement capability in assessing the effect of the action on wildlife goals and objectives.

C. Accessibility. When necessary and when compatible with resource management objectives, we may make exceptions to general access restrictions for visitors with disabilities to facilitate their experience. For example, refuge managers may allow hunters with certain disabilities special access to hunt blinds. Refuge managers may require specific physician's documentation before providing a special use permit to a hunter with a disability. Further, we should balance "walk-in" and remote fishing opportunities with easily accessible fishing opportunities. The Service, through this chapter and 605 FW 2-7, fulfills accessibility standards and requirements by adhering to the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 4151-4157), the 1984 Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (24 CFR 40), and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 126). These acts specify physical accessibility requirements in all construction and renovation projects funded wholly or in part by the Federal Government. In addition, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (29 U.S.C. 791 et. seq.), requires accessibility for all programs receiving Federal funds.

D. Safety. Visitor safety is a key issue in providing quality compatible wildlife-dependent recreation programs. Visitor safety at refuges is a high priority when developing compatible wildlife-dependent recreation programs. Refuge managers provide adequate law enforcement and supply visitors with information about specific hazards, including animal behavior; geographical, topographical, tidal, or flood hazards; inclement weather patterns; road and trail hazards; and other safety concerns. We also use environmental education and interpretive programs to alert visitors to safety issues. Visitors to designated wilderness areas of the Refuge System have an increased responsibility for their own safety.

E. Partners. Partnerships with other Federal and State agencies, tribes, organizations, industry, local communities, and others can produce significant contributions to our wildlife-dependent recreation programs. Refuge managers should contact potential cooperators and demonstrate the advantages associated with being a refuge supporter. Partnerships are developed by sharing expertise, personnel, materials, or money, and include "sharing" wildlife and habitat. Wildlife does not observe property lines or agency boundaries. Sharing photography areas may reduce human pressure from one spot or eliminate uses from sensitive spots by providing them off the refuge. Partnering is an excellent way of fostering a sense of ownership and stewardship of natural resources among a variety of stakeholder groups.

1.10 How do we ensure the quality of our wildlife-dependent recreation programs?

A. Refuge managers should use their available staff and funding resources to ensure the quality of wildlife-dependent recreation programs a refuge may offer to visitors. They should also maximize partnerships, use fee programs, and cooperative efforts. Refuge managers should remember that, in general, the greater the scope and complexity of a use, the greater the need for staff and money. They should offer wildlife-dependent recreation programs consistent with staff and funding resources needed to develop, operate, and implement the program safely and with quality standards. It is appropriate to concentrate resources on fewer, quality opportunities rather than offer many opportunities that lack quality.

B. The refuge manager may, where appropriate, take reasonable steps to facilitate and increase quality wildlife-dependent uses through partnerships, user fee programs, and/or cooperative efforts, including cost-share agreements, sharing personnel with nearby refuges, etc. Partnerships may help refuge managers more effectively finance and administer wildlife-dependent recreation programs on refuges by providing labor, funds, or other types of support. Where available and appropriate, refuge managers should work with Friends organizations, volunteers, contractors, businesses, local communities, educational institutions, State and tribal governments, other Federal agencies, conservation groups, other organizations, and the public to minimize or reduce the costs of implementing recreation

programs. Refuge managers should not enter into agreements that unnecessarily encumber lands and facilities or hinder meeting resource management objectives on the refuge.

1.11 Are there general criteria that we use to decide which uses we allow to facilitate compatible wildlife-dependent recreation? The following general criteria help refuge managers decide what supportive recreational uses to allow, encourage, or develop, and at what level. With adequate consultation, documentation, and cooperation with affected Federal, State, tribal, and local authorities and other groups, refuge managers must eliminate uses that do not meet these criteria.

A. Ensure Appropriateness. When compatible, the six wildlife-dependent recreational uses are appropriate. Refuge managers, in consultation with Regional/CNO offices when necessary, determine if other proposed uses are appropriate in the Refuge System (603 FW 1). Refuge managers must be able to show that the requested use contributes to fulfilling the refuge purpose(s), the Refuge System mission, or goals or objectives described in an approved management plan before investing additional resources for a compatibility determination.

B. Ensure Compatibility. Refuge managers should:

(1) Exercise sound professional judgment when making compatibility determinations on proposed recreational uses (see 603 FW 2). Compatibility determinations are inherently complex and require the refuge manager to consider his/her field experiences and knowledge of a refuge's resources, particularly biological resources, in addition to the collective wisdom of the entire staff. Then the refuge manager makes decisions that are consistent with principles of sound fish and wildlife management and administration, available scientific information, and all applicable laws and authorities.

(2) Consider the extent to which the refuge is able to adequately develop, manage, and maintain the proposed use so as to ensure compatibility.

(3) Under no circumstances (except emergency provisions necessary to protect the health and safety of visitors or any fish or wildlife population) may a refuge manager authorize any use not determined to be compatible.

1.12 When do we address the decision to allow wildlife-dependent recreation on proposed additions to the Refuge System?

A. When lands and waters are under consideration for addition to the Refuge System, the refuge manager, or the Regional chief/CNO Assistant Manager when no refuge manager is assigned, in coordination with State fish and wildlife agencies, will identify existing compatible wildlife-dependent recreation that he/she will allow to continue on an interim basis prior to acquisition, withdrawal, transfer, reclassification, or donation of any such lands. This does not, however, exempt interim openings from all other requirements; the refuge manager must still comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), NEPA, and any and all other relevant laws. We outline our process for complying with these laws in our opening package (see 605 FW 2.9 and 605 FW 3.8).

B. When preexisting compatible hunting or fishing is going to continue, the refuge manager must be proactive and initiate the opening package process when the preacquisition planning phase begins instead of waiting either until the acquisition process is complete or the CCP is completed and approved.

1.13 How do we open refuges to wildlife-dependent recreation? The decision to open a refuge to wildlife-dependent recreation depends on the laws and regulations applicable to the specific refuge and a determination by the refuge manager that opening an area to wildlife-dependent recreation is compatible (50 CFR 26.41 and 603 FW 2). The refuge manager's decision must be consistent with the principles of sound wildlife management, applicable wildlife objectives, and otherwise be in the public interest.

A. Specific Conditions. The following conditions apply to wildlife-dependent recreation on certain units of the Refuge System.

(1) Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs). WPAs are open to migratory bird, upland game, and big game hunting and sport fishing subject to the provisions of State laws (50 CFR 32.1 and 32.4). A VSP or rulemaking document is not necessary to open these areas to hunting because they are open to these uses until closed. However, we may restrict WPA wildlife-dependent recreation programs (as well as all other forms of entry) under 50 CFR 25.21(e) if circumstances warrant.

(2) Wetland, grassland, and conservation easements. Unless we purchase or otherwise obtain specific rights with the easement, we have no jurisdiction over wildlife-dependent recreation on wetland easements unless the activity would violate the terms of the easement. We most often acquire these easements as part of the Small Wetland Acquisition Program. The majority of these acquired easements are located in the Prairie Pothole Region of the country. For these easements, the landowner usually retains all rights to control public access, including wildlife-dependent recreation. The refuge manager should become familiar with the specific language of the easement to determine if these wildlife-dependent recreation policies are applicable.

(3) Easement refuges. The rights we acquired with an individual easement determine our control of wildlife-dependent recreation on an easement refuge. The Regional Director/CNO Manager determines the extent of our control over wildlife-dependent recreation on these areas according to the terms of the easement. If we control wildlife-dependent recreation, the refuge manager must follow all procedures required to open a refuge to wildlife-dependent recreation on easement refuges.

(4) Farm Service Agency easements (formerly Farmers Home Administration (FmHA)). The Farm Service Agency inventory property easement programs of 1985, 1990, and 1996 allow the Service to acquire wildlife-dependent recreational use rights with these easements. Not all easement properties will include the transfer of wildlife-dependent recreational use rights. Our control of recreation where we have not acquired those rights would only apply if the activity violates the terms of the easement.

(5) Refuges in Alaska. ANILCA allows the continuation of wildlife-dependent recreation on all refuges in Alaska under applicable Federal and State law as long as it is compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established (50 CFR 36.31). A VSP or rulemaking document is not necessary to permit wildlife-dependent recreation on these refuges. We may prohibit or restrict wildlife-dependent recreation only in conjunction with notices and hearings under the requirements of 50 CFR 36.42 regarding public participation and closure procedures. Local rural residents may hunt wildlife for subsistence uses in compliance with applicable Federal and State laws. Under ANILCA, nonwasteful subsistence use of wildlife by rural residents has priority over other consumptive uses permitted on refuges in Alaska. In addition, section 810 of ANILCA requires that the refuge manager evaluate the effect of all uses, including wildlife-dependent recreation, on subsistence uses and needs on Alaska refuges and precludes the use if it significantly restricts subsistence uses.

B. Evaluation Criteria for Deciding Whether to Allow Wildlife-Dependent Recreation Programs. We will use the following criteria and standards to evaluate whether to allow wildlife-dependent recreation programs on units of the Refuge System:

(1) Compatibility. Wildlife-dependent recreation must be compatible with refuge purpose(s) and the Refuge System mission (see 603 FW 2 for information on compatibility determinations).

(2) Biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health. When considering compatible wildlife-dependent recreation, refuge managers will first consider their refuges' contribution to biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health at multiple landscape scales. We formulate refuge goals and objectives for population management by considering species life histories, natural densities, social structures, and population dynamics. We consider population objectives set by national plans, such as the 1986 North American Waterfowl Management Plan, State wildlife conservation management plans, and other programs.

(3) Conflict management. Wildlife-dependent recreation programs should minimize conflicts between user groups. An integrated approach to providing opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreation, such as that used in the development of the VSP, will minimize conflicts between individuals participating in these uses. We will, for example, evaluate time and space, scheduling, and zoning as methods to ensure opportunities for quality experiences among different user groups. In the case of significant conflicts between compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses, the refuge manager will coordinate with State fish and wildlife agencies and make the final decision on which use(s) to allow and which to prohibit or curtail (see section 1.6C).

C. Consultation and Coordination.

(1) Coordination with States. Both the Service and the State fish and wildlife agencies have authorities and responsibilities for management of fish and wildlife on refuges as described in 43 CFR 24. Consistent with the Administration Act, as amended, the Service Director will interact, coordinate, cooperate, and collaborate with the State fish and wildlife agencies in a timely and effective manner on the acquisition and management of refuges. Under both

the Administration Act, as amended, and 43 CFR 24, the Director as the Secretary of the Interior's designee will ensure that Refuge System regulations permitting hunting and fishing are, to the extent practicable, consistent with State laws, regulations, and management plans. We charge refuge managers, as the designated representatives of the Director at the local level, with carrying out these directives. We will provide State fish and wildlife agencies timely and meaningful opportunities to participate in the development and implementation of programs conducted under this policy. These opportunities will most commonly occur through State fish and wildlife agency representation on CCP planning teams. However, we will provide other opportunities for the State fish and wildlife agencies to participate in the development and implementation of program changes that we would make outside of the CCP process. Further, we will continue to provide State fish and wildlife agencies opportunities to discuss and, if necessary, elevate decisions within the hierarchy of the Service.

(2) Coordination with tribes. In compliance with Consultation and Coordination With Indian Tribal Governments (E.O. 13175), we will coordinate with tribal governments having adjoining or overlapping jurisdiction during the development of wildlife-dependent recreation programs on refuges, and whenever we plan significant changes to our existing wildlife-dependent recreation programs.

(3) Public involvement. The appropriate level of public involvement must accompany new or significant changes to existing wildlife-dependent recreation programs. Refuge managers must plan efforts well in advance of significant proposed changes. A variety of methods are available for the refuge manager to use to involve and inform the public, including public meetings, workshops, news releases, and mailings to interested groups. We encourage refuge managers to continue to use these and other notification methods.

D. Develop a VSP. The VSP is usually a step-down management plan of the refuge's CCP and is the overarching document for providing visitor services in the Refuge System. This plan is an integrated analysis of all applicable aspects of visitor service programs on a refuge. Generally, a refuge is opened to wildlife-dependent recreation by submitting a VSP covering all proposed uses and any other appropriate documents to the Regional/CNO office. The Regional Director/CNO Manager reviews and approves the plan, and the Regional/CNO coordinator forwards a copy of these documents to the Refuge System Headquarters office (Headquarters). In order to comply with 50 CFR 26.33, the opening of hunting or fishing on a refuge requires the extra step of highlighting the hunting and fishing chapters and sending the VSP to the Refuges Federal Register liaison in Headquarters. It is acceptable to only have the chapters pertaining to hunting and fishing completed when submitting the VSP to the Refuges Federal Register liaison (605 FW 2.9 and 605 FW 3.8). In such instances, the refuge manager will continue developing the other portions of the VSP as the hunting and fishing regulations are being prepared for publication in the Federal Register.

(1) Elements of the VSP. The development of this plan must follow all appropriate NEPA guidelines, contain the required NEPA documentation and decision document, and, if necessary, contain the ESA section 7 consultation. Additionally, it must include compatibility determinations on any wildlife-dependent recreation programs. If the refuge has not yet completed a CCP, we consider the VSP a stand-alone document until completion of the CCP, and then we reevaluate and incorporate the uses into the CCP. When a refuge develops a VSP, we incorporate existing refuge hunting and fishing plans and any other visitor services plans into the VSP. The VSP must provide documentation of the wildlife-dependent recreation allowed on a refuge, including the relationship of wildlife-dependent recreation to refuge purpose(s), goals, objectives, and the Refuge System mission. Exhibit 1 contains an example of a VSP outline.

(2) Outreach. The refuge manager will submit to the Regional/CNO office a draft news release and an outreach plan on the VSP. These documents must be submitted prior to opening a refuge to wildlife-dependent recreation.

1.14 What are the visitor services standards on refuges? Service employees, volunteers, concessionaires, and other cooperators conform to the following standards when planning, conducting, and evaluating all visitor service activities and facilities at refuges. These standards replace those outlined in the Public Use Minimum Requirements Handbook adopted by the Service in 1984. You will be able to find specific details about these requirements in the Visitor Services Requirements Handbook, which we are currently developing. Through the development of the VSP, we will set goals, determine measurable objectives, identify strategies, and establish evaluation criteria for all visitor services, including, but not limited to, compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses. Careful planning provides visitors opportunities to enjoy and appreciate fish, wildlife, plants, and other resources. As a result, visitors will develop an understanding of and build an appreciation for each individual's role in the conservation of our Nation's fish and wildlife resources. The visitor services standards are:

A. Standard 1. Develop a VSP. Refuge managers will develop a VSP that addresses all compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses on their refuge. Managers should familiarize themselves with Exhibit 1 and, when it becomes available, the Visitor Services Requirements Handbook.

B. Standard 2. Welcome and orient visitors. We will assure that refuges are welcoming, safe, and accessible. We will provide visitors with clear information so they can easily determine where they can go, what they can do, and how to safely and ethically engage in recreational and educational activities. Facilities will meet the quality criteria defined in section 1.6 of this chapter. We will treat visitors with courtesy and in a professional manner.

C. Standard 3. Provide quality hunting opportunities. Hunting is a wildlife-dependent recreational use and, when compatible, an appropriate use of resources in the Refuge System. Hunting programs will meet the quality criteria defined in section 1.6 and, to the extent practicable, be carried out consistent with State laws, regulations, and management plans (see 605 FW 2).

D. Standard 4. Provide quality fishing opportunities. Fishing is a wildlife-dependent recreational use and, when compatible, an appropriate use of resources in the Refuge System. Fishing programs will meet the quality criteria defined in section 1.6 and, to the extent practicable, be carried out consistent with State laws, regulations, and management plans (see 605 FW 3).

E. Standard 5. Provide quality wildlife observation and photography opportunities. Visitors of all ages and abilities will have an opportunity to observe and photograph key wildlife and habitat on the refuge when it is compatible with refuge purpose(s). Viewing and photographing wildlife in natural or managed environments should foster a connection between visitors and natural resources (see 605 FW 4 and 605 FW 5, respectively). Wildlife observation and photography programs will meet the quality criteria defined in section 1.6.

F. Standard 6. Develop and implement a quality environmental education program. Through curriculum-based environmental education packages based on national and State education standards, we will advance public awareness, understanding, appreciation, and knowledge of key fish, wildlife, plant, and resource issues. Each refuge will assess its potential to work with schools to provide an appropriate level of environmental education. We may support environmental education through the use of facilities, equipment, educational materials, teacher workshops, and study sites that are safe, accessible, and conducive to learning (see 605 FW 6). Environmental education programs will meet the quality criteria defined in section 1.6.

G. Standard 7. Provide quality interpretation of key resources and issues. We will communicate fish, wildlife, habitat, and other resource issues to visitors of all ages and abilities through effective interpretation. We will tailor core messages and delivery methods to provide interpretation to refuge visitors and present them in appropriate locations. Interpretive programs will meet the quality criteria defined in section 1.6.

H. Standard 8. Manage for other recreational use opportunities. We may allow other recreational uses that support or enhance one of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses or minimally conflict with any of the wildlife-dependent recreational uses when we determine they are both appropriate and compatible. We will allow uses that are either legally mandated or occur due to special circumstances.

I. Standard 9. Communicate key issues with off-site audiences. Effective outreach depends on open and continuing communication and collaboration between the refuge and its many publics. Effective outreach involves determining and understanding the issues, identifying audiences, listening to stakeholders, crafting messages, selecting the most effective delivery techniques, and evaluating effectiveness. If conducted successfully, the results we achieve will further refuge purpose(s) and the Refuge System mission.

J. Standard 10. Build volunteer programs and partnerships with Friends organizations. Volunteer and Friends organizations fortify refuge staffs with their gifts of time, skills, and energy. They are integral to the future of the Refuge System. Where appropriate, refuge staff will initiate and nurture relationships with volunteers and Friends organizations and will continually support, monitor, and evaluate these groups with the goal of fortifying important refuge activities. The National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998 strengthens the Refuge System's role in developing effective partnerships with various community groups. Whether through volunteers, Friends organizations, or other important partnerships in the community, refuge personnel will seek to make the refuge an active community member, giving rise to a stronger Refuge System.

1.15 How do we address special requests and temporary situations? The Refuge System's wildlife-dependent recreation policy must be flexible enough to address special requests or temporary situations. We accommodate these requests only if they are appropriate and compatible. The refuge manager, with guidance from the Regional/CNO office, may issue a one-time or short-term special use permit or letter of authorization for a use not generally allowed. We must keep written justification documenting the analysis and decision on file at the refuge headquarters.

**605 FW 1
Exhibit 1
Page 1 of 2**

Example of Outline for a Visitor Services Plan

Title/Approval Page

Table of Contents

Summary

Introduction

Brief Refuge History

1. Significant Features (e.g., habitat, wildlife, cultural resources)
2. Primary Refuge Resource Management Goals and Objectives (from CCP, if completed)
3. Internal/External Issues

Local Setting

1. Community Description (e.g., economics, demographics, population, etc.)
2. Travel Links (e.g., major highways, airports, docks, etc.)
3. Visitor Services Opportunities (off refuge)

Visitor Services Standards:

(Identify goals/objectives/strategies, current audiences, target audiences, current program status, future actions, monitoring, and evaluation for each)

- Welcome and Orient Visitors

- Provide Quality Hunting Opportunities (see outline in hunting chapter)
- Provide Quality Fishing Opportunities (see outline in fishing chapter)
- Provide Quality Wildlife Observation

- Provide Quality Photographic Opportunities
- Develop and Implement Quality Environmental Education Programs
- Provide Quality Interpretations of Key Resources
- Manage for Other Recreational Use Opportunities
- Communicate Key Issues with Off-Site Audiences
- Build Volunteer Programs and Partnerships with Refuge Support Groups

Other Applicable Visitor Services Programs:

(Identify goals/objectives/strategies, current audiences, target audiences, monitoring, and evaluation for each)

- Refuge Law Enforcement
- Concession Operations
- Fee Programs
- Cooperating Association/Friends Groups
- Other (including community partners, academia, and foundations)

Implementing the Plan

- Essential Staffing Needs
- Table of Projects, Costs, RONS/MMS Identified
- Partnership Funding and Resources

Appendix

- Compatibility Determinations (if not contained in CCP)
- NEPA Document/Decision Document, if applicable (if not contained in CCP)
- List of Permits

- ESA Section 7 Consultations

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
REFUGE MANAGEMENT**

Refuge Management

Part 605 Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

Chapter 2 Hunting

605 FW 2

2.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides the Service's policy governing the management of recreational hunting programs on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). In an effort to avoid redundancy, we have placed critical information and guidance for all wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation) in 605 FW 1. Read 605 FW 1 with this chapter for complete information for planning and implementation purposes.

2.2 What is the scope of this chapter? The policies contained in this chapter apply to recreational hunting programs within the Refuge System. See 605 FW 1 and other chapters and regulations governing policies, guidelines, and procedures for additional information.

2.3 What is our policy regarding hunting in the Refuge System?

A. The overarching goal of our wildlife-dependent recreation policy is to enhance opportunities and access to quality visitor experiences on refuges and to manage the refuge to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats (605 FW 1.6). Hunting is an important wildlife management tool that we recognize as a healthy, traditional outdoor pastime, deeply rooted in the American heritage. Hunting can instill a unique understanding and appreciation of wildlife, their behavior, and their habitat needs.

B. Hunting is an appropriate use of the Refuge System when compatible. It is also considered a priority general public use of the Refuge System and should receive enhanced consideration over nonpriority uses. We strongly encourage refuge managers to provide visitors quality hunting opportunities when compatible. Hunting programs can promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on lands and waters in the Refuge System. We rely on close cooperation and coordination with State fish and wildlife management agencies in developing and managing hunting opportunities on refuges and in setting refuge population management goals and objectives. Regulations permitting hunting of wildlife within the Refuge System must be, to the extent practicable, consistent with State fish and wildlife laws, regulations, and management plans. We encourage refuge staff to develop and take full advantage of opportunities to work with partners who have an interest in helping us promote quality hunting programs on refuges.

2.4 What are the guiding principles for the Refuge System's hunting programs? The guiding principles of the Refuge System's hunting programs are to:

- A.** Manage wildlife populations consistent with Refuge System-specific management plans approved after 1997 and, to the extent practicable, State fish and wildlife conservation plans;
- B.** Promote visitor understanding of and increase visitor appreciation for America's natural resources;
- C.** Provide opportunities for quality recreational and educational experiences consistent with criteria describing quality found in 605 FW 1.6;
- D.** Encourage participation in this tradition deeply rooted in America's natural heritage and conservation history; and
- E.** Minimize conflicts with visitors participating in other compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities.

2.5 What authorities allow us to support hunting in the Refuge System? See 605 FW 1.3 for laws and Executive orders that govern hunting in the Refuge System.

2.6 What do these terms mean?

A. Inviolate Sanctuaries for Migratory Birds. A refuge, or portions thereof, acquired or established in one of the following ways:

(1) With the approval of the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) for the purpose of an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds; or

(2) By an instrument or document that states that we are establishing the refuge as an “inviolate sanctuary for migratory birds, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds” under, or to fulfill the purpose of, the Migratory Bird Conservation Act.

B. Open to Public Hunting. An area where we allow individuals holding, if required, valid license(s), permit(s), stamp(s), or other documents to enter and harvest specific wildlife species in the Refuge System. Areas open to hunting may differ from areas open to the general visitor for other activities.

C. Special Season Hunts. Hunts that specify the methods individuals can use in the field. Bows, shotguns, and muzzleloading firearms are examples of methods that may be used during special season hunts.

2.7 How do we manage refuge hunting programs? We plan, manage, conduct, and evaluate refuge hunting programs in coordination with State fish and wildlife agencies on a consistent basis, in ways that conserve fish and wildlife and their habitats, ensure hunter and visitor safety, comply with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, and promote respect for the resource. In addition, our regulations need to be consistent, to the extent practicable, with State regulations. Hunting on refuges should strive to meet the criteria for a quality wildlife-dependent recreation program as defined in 605 FW 1.6. The following tools and techniques should help ensure quality hunting opportunities are available:

A. Boundary Hunting. We discourage hunting adjacent to refuge areas or neighboring lands closed to hunting. Refuge managers can alter hunt boundary lines or habitat or eliminate or close parking areas and access roads to distribute hunters or modify wildlife use patterns in ways that make boundary hunting less appealing. Refuge managers must use retrieval zones sparingly and only to prevent waste by allowing the retrieval of dead or crippled game in closed areas. Prior to establishing these zones, managers should consider adjusting hunt boundaries. They should also consider the resources available for signing and enforcing retrieval zone restrictions. Whenever possible, refuge managers should not allow hunters to enter closed areas.

B. Check Stations. Refuge managers should use check stations as a means to monitor the hunt, gather important information that we cannot obtain in a less expensive manner, or gather biological information about wildlife populations. You should periodically evaluate the continued use of check stations to determine if there is a more cost-effective means of providing quality hunting services; for example, coordination with State fish and wildlife check stations. You may use permanent check stations to control hunting area access, collect biological information, and, when appropriate, to enforce hunting regulations.

C. Communication Materials. Refuge managers can benefit from professionally developed outreach materials that provide clear and thorough information to hunters. Brochures must conform with the Service Graphics Standards and be consistent with refuge-specific regulations. Refuge managers do not need to include regulations and dates that are identical to State seasons in the refuge brochure. Refuge managers should ensure refuge brochures include information that encourages hunters to hunt safely and to comply with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations. We encourage refuge managers to use both print and electronic media, such as the Internet, to distribute information. Refuge managers should work with Regional and California/Nevada Operations Office (CNO) staff to ensure all communications products meet approved standards and guidelines.

D. Equipment. Refuge managers, in coordination with State fish and wildlife agencies, may place limits on certain equipment such as decoys, boats, tree stands, and types of firearm or ammunition if they determine that such limits reduce resource damage or hunter conflicts, improve the quality of the hunt, or provide for the safety of other refuge visitors. Our hunting regulations should be as consistent as practicable with State laws, regulations, and management plans.

E. Fees. The refuge manager makes the decision to charge a fee in coordination with the Regional/CNO office. We have the authority to charge fees for applications, refuge permits, and the use of facilities (e.g., hunting blinds) under existing recreation fee programs. The authority under which we collect fees stipulates how we may use the monies. We use fees collected to enhance and maintain hunting programs. The Regional/CNO fee coordinator can assist with the approval of fees as well as provide information on appropriate fund use.

F. Hunting by Service Employees. Service employees are subject to the same rules and regulations as the general public. If limited hunting opportunities exist, refuge managers should discuss with Service employees the need to be sensitive to possible visitor perceptions of favoritism. When Service employees actively participate in assigning limited hunting permits, they will not participate in that particular hunt on the affected refuge lands.

G. Hunting with Dogs. The use of properly trained dogs is an important part of the American hunting tradition that can enhance the quality of the hunting experience, foster wildlife conservation, and aid in the recovery of downed game. We recognize the long-term relationship between dogs and hunters, and we encourage the use of properly trained hunting dogs for the hunting of waterfowl, upland game birds, and other species. Refuge managers must carefully consider the impacts of the use of dogs on the refuge, specific approved refuge objectives, and the activities permitted by the State when evaluating the compatibility of hunting dog use. A refuge manager must discuss the following in the compatibility determination before permitting hunting dogs on the refuge: the likelihood of the dog injuring or harassing nontarget wildlife species to such an extent as to significantly impact population segments of the nontarget species, and the quality of the experience of visitors participating in other compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities.

H. Night Hunting. If a refuge is generally not open after sunset, refuge managers may make an exception and allow night hunting consistent to the extent practicable with State regulations. Refuge managers must base the decision on specific approved refuge objectives, and not historic use. See 605 FW 1.9B, for additional information about after-hours activities.

I. Nontoxic Shot. While hunting waterfowl and while hunting with shotguns on Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) or on certain other areas of the Refuge System, hunters may possess only nontoxic shot that conforms with the standards identified in the 50 CFR 32.2(k). This regulation does not apply to turkey and deer hunters using rifles, buckshot, or slugs. In many cases, nontoxic shot must be used to hunt upland game species on refuges.

J. Permits. We require hunters to have all applicable Federal, State, and tribal licenses, permits, and stamps in their possession. We may issue refuge permits to limit participation, gather information, or otherwise appropriately manage hunting. When we use refuge permits to limit hunter numbers, we will issue them on a fair and equitable basis, such as using lotteries or issuing permits based on order of receipt. We coordinate with State and tribal application and lottery processes where practicable. Application processes should be flexible and fair to provide an opportunity to all potential hunters. Under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Congress gives qualified rural residents preference to harvest fish, wildlife, and other resources for subsistence on Alaskan refuges.

K. Proficiency Testing. Generally, we support required State hunter testing. Due to special circumstances, a refuge manager may implement additional proficiency tests more restrictive than that required by the State. The Regional chief/CNO Assistant Manager, NWRS must approve any additional testing.

L. Refuge Law Enforcement. Refuge law enforcement ensures legal use of fish and wildlife resources on refuges, as prescribed by law. We use refuge law enforcement to obtain compliance with laws and regulations necessary for proper administration, management, and protection of facilities of the Refuge System. The refuge law enforcement effort should be sufficient to protect human safety and wildlife populations, ensure compliance with regulations, and based on past experiences and current circumstances.

M. Special Hunts. We will address special types of hunts, such as falconry, in the hunt section of the visitor service plan (VSP). We encourage refuge managers to set aside areas or times to promote hunting by youths, individuals with disabilities, or underrepresented groups. Experiencing hunting in a safe environment and exposure to proper hunting methods can be important in developing life skills and establishing or increasing public support for healthy ecosystems. Refuge managers should take advantage of these opportunities to inform young hunters and their parents about the importance of wildlife conservation and management.

N. Special Season Hunts. We offer hunting opportunities to as broad a spectrum of the public as possible. In circumstances where standard hunting opportunities may not be feasible due to special situations, consider special season hunts under the following conditions:

(1) Safety. Configuration of hunt areas, such as long, narrow corridors or occupied inholdings, may create situations where we should only allow specific methods of take due to safety considerations. For example, extremely dense cover or other vegetation characteristics may create situations where rifles are not appropriate.

(2) Limited harvest. In cases where there is a relatively low harvestable surplus or other constraints, offering special season hunts could be a method to provide hunting opportunities where they would otherwise not exist.

(3) Special State seasons. In some States, the State designates separate seasons for take with special methods of take. The refuge manager decides if a special hunt approved by the State is compatible on the refuge.

O. Zoning Recreational Use. We may use time and space zoning to achieve balanced hunting. Examples of recreational use zoning areas are hunting blinds separated from free-roam areas, upland hunters separated from waterfowl hunters, and "special hunt" opportunities (e.g., "muzzleloading firearm area only" separated from archery).

2.8 How do we manage hunting on inviolate sanctuaries for migratory birds? If a refuge, or portion thereof, has been designated, acquired, reserved, or set apart as an inviolate sanctuary, we may only allow hunting of migratory game birds on no more than 40 percent of that refuge, or portion, at any one time unless we find that taking of any such species in more than 40 percent of such area would be beneficial to the species (16 U.S.C. 668dd(d)(1)(A), National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act; 16 U.S.C. 703-712, Migratory Bird Treaty Act; and 16 U.S.C. 715a-715r, Migratory Bird Conservation Act). Generally, Regional Directors/CNO Manager have the authority to change the number of acres open to hunting. However, before we can open more than 40 percent of an inviolate sanctuary to hunting, we must consider the reasons for doing so, and we must publish these reasons in the Federal Register. Because of this requirement, the Director, under delegation from the Secretary, must approve all proposals to open more than 40 percent of an inviolate sanctuary to migratory bird hunting. Refuge managers must carefully evaluate all such proposals to ensure the proposed action will be compatible. Inviolate sanctuary classification imposes no limits on hunting nonmigratory birds or other game species.

2.9 How do you open a refuge to hunting? The refuge manager must submit an opening package for hunting programs as follows:

A. To initiate or expand hunting programs, the Service must publish in the Federal Register any proposed and final refuge-specific regulations pertaining to that use prior to implementing or publishing them in refuge hunt brochures or other public documents. These regulations may include an entirely new hunt program, a new category of hunting (e.g., Big Game, Migratory Bird, or Upland Game), a new species not addressed in a previous opening package, or a new area(s) open to public hunting not addressed in a previous opening package. Opening packages for new species or new areas may be waived only if the refuge manager makes an affirmative finding that all other policy requirements for compatibility, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act section 7 evaluation, etc. have been fully satisfied. Refuge-specific regulations must be supported by the appropriate an approved opening package containing the elements described below. It must contain detailed information the public needs to know to avoid violating refuge rules. Use of signs and brochures may supplement the final refuge-specific regulations to notify the public of the final refuge-specific regulations. Refuge managers must forward all opening packages to the Regional Director/CNO Manager for approval before submission to the Refuges Federal Register liaison in Headquarters. The refuge is officially open to hunting only after the effective date of the final rule (50 CFR 32.1), except in Alaska, where under ANILCA the refuge is automatically open to hunting activities. The regulations are only one element of a complete opening package, which is comprised of the following documents:

- (1) Hunting chapter of the VSP;
- (2) Compatibility determination, which must include analysis of the availability of resources with which to administer the use;
- (3) NEPA documentation (categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or environmental impact statement);
- (4) Appropriate decision document (e.g., finding of no significant impact or record of decision);
- (5) Endangered Species Act section 7 evaluation;
- (6) Copies of letters requesting State and, where appropriate, tribal involvement and the results of the request;
- (7) Draft news release;
- (8) Outreach plan; and

(9) Draft refuge-specific regulations.

B. Refuge managers must annually review their refuge-specific hunting regulations and the VSP to ensure continued compatibility and consistency of the visitor services program with existing laws and regulations. Refuge managers must submit any refuge-specific amendments (additions, deletions, or modifications) each year to their Regional/CNO office for review and notification of State fish and wildlife agencies when there are differences from State regulations. Major revisions in the VSP (e.g., addition of a new hunting activity) will be in the form of an amendment to the plan. Refuge managers handle preparation and approval of amendments to the VSP the same as preparation and approval of the plan itself. Refuge managers should not submit changes for inclusion in the rulemaking process unless they have all approvals and other required documents. After Regional Director/CNO Manager approval, the Regional/CNO office sends that information to the Refuges Federal Register liaison in Headquarters, with the refuge-specific language, for inclusion in the rulemaking documents for publication in the Federal Register. We cannot publish a refuge opening without the complete opening package. Refuge-specific regulations should be standard and consistent in format throughout the Refuge System. The Refuges Federal Register liaison in Headquarters must receive this information by January 31 each year, unless otherwise requested by the Director, to allow sufficient time for compilation and review by affected Service program offices and the Office of the Solicitor. After receiving approval from these offices, the Headquarters Federal Register liaison will submit the proposed rule to the Director for approval. After required Departmental approval(s), we publish the proposed rule in the Federal Register with a 30-day public comment period. We include guidelines for preparing and submitting regulations and amendments below and in Exhibit 1.

(1) Guidelines for preparation of refuge-specific hunting regulations. There are three primary purposes for compliance with hunting regulations on refuges: conserving the resource, assisting in managing the resources, and ensuring safety. Generally, State hunting regulations provide the framework for meeting these three primary purposes. Refuge managers will make every effort to exhaust the State regulatory process. However, if State regulations do not completely address these criteria, refuge-specific regulations may be necessary. These regulations should focus primarily on the management of fish and wildlife resources and be enforceable. For example, if we require permits on a specific refuge, a statement that we require special refuge permits is all that is necessary. It is not appropriate to include details in the regulations. Address details in a leaflet or the permit application. Also, do not submit regulatory text for the refuge unless it represents a change to the existing language in 50 CFR 32. If you are adding conditions to those already published, state that these are additions and indicate where you want them inserted in the regulatory text. The refuge manager should work cooperatively with State fish and wildlife agencies to develop and implement refuge-specific regulations.

(2) Duplication of existing 50 CFR provisions. When writing regulations, check 50 CFR to avoid duplication. For example, section 27.31 restricts motor vehicles to “designated routes of travel . . . delineated on maps by the refuge manager;” section 27.95 prohibits setting fires; and section 32.2(j) addresses possession of alcohol.

(3) Duplication of State regulations. 50 CFR 32.2(d) states: “Each person shall comply with applicable provisions of the laws and regulations of the State wherein any area is located unless further restricted by Federal law or regulation.” Further, 50 CFR 32.3(c) states “Refuge-specific hunting regulations will not liberalize existing State laws and regulations.” Therefore, do not repeat State bag limits, shell limits, seasons, hours, etc., in the refuge-specific regulations where we are not deviating from them. Refuge managers will address why refuge-specific regulations deviate from State laws and regulations in a cover memo to the appropriate Regional/CNO office representative and communicate the same information to the appropriate official in the State fish and wildlife agency. The preamble to the regulation should also include these explanations.

(4) Preparation of refuge-specific regulations. List bag limits, seasons, and hours that differ from the State’s in the refuge-specific regulations. Please use the example in Exhibit 1 for your submission for changes or additions to 50 CFR 32.

Examples for Preparing and Submitting Regulations

Use the following as an example to modify existing text:

Hunting:

§32.42 Minnesota.

Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge

B. Upland Game Hunting.

Replace the text to read as follows:

We allow hunting of partridge, pheasant, wild turkey, gray and fox squirrel, cottontail and jack rabbit, red and gray fox, raccoon, and striped skunk on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations [if true] subject to the following conditions:

Condition B.1. remains the same.

Add new condition B.2. to read as follows:

B.2. We allow hunting of fox, raccoon, and striped skunk only during open seasons for other small game species. We prohibit the use of dogs while raccoon hunting.

Use the following example for an addition of a refuge:

§ 32.20 Alabama.

Grand Bay National Wildlife Refuge

A. Migratory Bird Game Hunting. We allow hunting of geese, ducks, and coots on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations [if true] subject to the following condition: We require a refuge permit.

B. Upland Game Hunting. We allow hunting of squirrel and rabbits on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulation [if true] subject to the following condition: We require a refuge permit.

C. Big Game Hunting. We allow hunting of white-tailed deer on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulation [if true] subject to the following condition: We require a refuge permit.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
REFUGE MANAGEMENT**

Refuge Management

Part 605 Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

Chapter 3 Recreational Fishing

605 FW 3

3.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides the Service's policy governing the management of recreational fishing programs on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). In an effort to avoid redundancy, we have placed critical information and guidance for all wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation) in 605 FW 1. Read 605 FW 1 with this chapter for complete information for planning and implementation purposes.

3.2 What is the scope of this chapter? The policies contained in this chapter apply to recreational fishing programs within the Refuge System. See 605 FW 1 and other chapters and regulations governing policies, guidelines, and procedures for additional information.

3.3 What is our policy regarding fishing in the Refuge System?

A. The overarching goal of our wildlife-dependent recreation policy is to enhance opportunities and access to quality visitor experiences on refuges and to manage the refuge to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats (see 605 FW 1.6). We recognize fishing as a traditional outdoor pastime that is deeply rooted in America's natural heritage.

B. Fishing is an appropriate use of the Refuge System when compatible. It is also considered a priority general public use of the Refuge System and should receive enhanced consideration over nonpriority uses. We strongly encourage refuge managers to provide visitors quality fishing opportunities when compatible. Refuge managers follow the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health policy (601 FW 3) when addressing fish stocking. Fishing programs promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on all lands and waters in the Refuge System. The Service's Division of Fish and Wildlife Management and Habitat Restoration has many field offices with a broad range of expertise that are available to the refuge manager when planning and managing fishing programs. Refuge managers should take advantage of this important resource. We rely on close cooperation and coordination with State fish and wildlife management agencies to develop and manage fishing opportunities on refuges and in setting refuge fish population management goals and objectives. Regulations permitting fishing within the Refuge System must be, to the extent practicable, consistent with State fish and wildlife laws, regulations, and management plans. We encourage refuge staff to develop and take full advantage of opportunities to work with partners who have an interest in helping us promote quality fishing programs on refuges.

3.4 What are the guiding principles of the Refuge System's fishing programs? The guiding principles of the Refuge System's fishing programs are to:

A. Effectively maintain healthy and diverse fish communities and aquatic ecosystems through the use of scientific management techniques;

B. Promote visitor understanding of, and increase visitor appreciation for, America's natural resources;

C. Provide opportunities for quality recreational and educational experiences consistent with criteria describing quality found in 605 FW 1.6;

D. Encourage participation in this tradition deeply rooted in America's natural heritage and conservation history; and

E. Minimize conflicts with visitors participating in other compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities.

3.5 What authorities allow us to support fishing in the Refuge System? See 605 FW 1.3 for laws and Executive orders that govern fishing in the Refuge System.

3.6 What do these terms mean?

A. Live Bait. Any live aquatic organism used to catch target fish.

B. Naturalized. Any nonnative species not classified as invasive that, as a result of a human introduction, is established and is reproducing in a particular watershed. Generally, we will refer to the appropriate State's definition of naturalized. Refuge managers follow the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health policy (601 FW 3) when addressing fish stocking.

C. Nonnative. Any species that is not historically or currently part of a particular ecosystem except as the result of an introduction.

D. Open to Public Fishing. An area where we allow fishing by any individual holding, if required, a valid license, permit(s), stamp(s) or other documents allowing the taking of a specific species of fish in the Refuge System. Areas open to fishing may differ from areas open to the general public for other activities.

E. Tournament Fishing. An event where the fishing is organized and coordinated in the Refuge System and waters primarily for the purpose of competition for monetary or other prizes.

F. Unattended Tackle. Any fishing hook(s), device(s), or line(s) that is not handheld or not attached to a fishing rod, reel, or pole under the immediate control of the user (excluding rod and pole holders and ice fishing tip-ups), and any fishing tackle designed, rigged, floated, or tied off for the purposes of catching fish while "unattended" by the fishing visitor (e.g., trotlines, setlines).

3.7 How do we manage refuge fishing programs? We plan, manage, conduct, and evaluate refuge fishing programs in coordination with State fish and wildlife agencies on a consistent basis in ways that conserve habitat and fish and wildlife, ensure angler and visitor safety, comply with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, and promote respect for the resource. In addition, our regulations need to be consistent, to the extent practicable, with State regulations. Fishing on refuges should strive to meet the criteria of a quality wildlife-dependent recreation program as defined in section 605 FW 1.6. The following guidelines should help ensure that quality fishing opportunities are available:

A. Barbless Hooks. The use of barbless hooks can reduce fish handling time for certain species of fish intended for release. We encourage refuge managers who manage specific programs that are "catch and release" fishing to take the lead, where appropriate, in introducing barbless hook methods to anglers in brochures, on signs, and in other information sheets in those areas where fisheries will benefit.

B. Communication Materials. Refuge managers can benefit from professionally developed outreach materials that provide clear and thorough information to anglers. Brochures must conform to Service Graphics Standards and be consistent with refuge-specific regulations. Refuge managers do not need to include regulations and dates that are identical to State seasons in the refuge brochure. Refuge managers should ensure refuge brochures include information that encourages anglers to fish safely, comply with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, and employ techniques that reduce injury to released fish. We encourage refuge managers to use both print and electronic media, such as the Internet, to distribute information. Refuge managers should work with Regional and California/Nevada Operations Office (CNO) staff to ensure all communications products meet approved standards and guidelines.

C. Fees. The refuge manager makes the decision to charge a fee in coordination with the Regional/CNO office. We have the authority to charge fees for applications, refuge permits, and the use of facilities (e.g., boat ramps) under existing recreation fee programs. We use fees collected to enhance and maintain fishing programs. The authority under which we collect fees stipulates how we may use the monies. The Regional/CNO fee coordinator can assist with the approval of fees.

D. Fishing by Service Employees. Service employees are subject to the same rules and regulations as the general public. If limited fishing opportunities exist, refuge managers should discuss with Service employees the need to be sensitive to possible visitor perceptions of favoritism. Personnel may not fish in areas that are not available to the general visitor. This policy does not apply to the collection of fish by refuge staff for the purpose of monitoring specific fish populations.

E. Ice Fishing. Refuge managers should encourage ice fishing where it is compatible and can be safely conducted. We discourage the use of long-term structures on refuge waters. We may only approve the use of these structures if the use is appropriate and compatible.

F. Live Bait Methods. Use of throw nets, minnow traps, and other means/methods of taking natural bait will comply with State regulations unless we list more restrictive measures in the refuge-specific regulations. We will limit bait collection on refuges to the recreational harvest of live bait for personal use only (except as provided in legislation for subsistence and commercial use under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA)).

G. Night Fishing. If a refuge is generally not open after sunset, refuge managers may make an exception and allow night fishing. Refuge managers must base the decision on specific refuge objectives, and not historic use. See 605 FW 1.9B for additional information on after-hours activities.

H. Nonnative Bait. We generally prohibit the use of live, nonnative aquatic bait on Refuge System waters where we have jurisdiction. We will also generally refer to the individual State's regulations on the use of naturalized bait for Refuge System waters.

I. Permits. We require anglers to have all applicable Federal, State, and tribal licenses, permits, and/or stamps in their possession. We can issue refuge permits to limit access, regulate methods of take, or gather information. If we use refuge fishing permits to limit angler numbers, we will issue them on a fair and equitable basis, such as using lotteries or issuing permits based on order of receipt. We coordinate with State and tribal application and lottery processes where practicable. Application processes should be flexible and fair to provide an opportunity to all potential anglers. Under ANILCA, Congress gives qualified rural residents preference to harvest fish, wildlife, and other resources for subsistence on Alaskan refuges.

J. Refuge Law Enforcement. Refuge law enforcement ensures legal use of fish and wildlife resources on refuges, as prescribed by law. We use refuge law enforcement to obtain compliance with laws and regulations necessary for proper administration, management, and protection of facilities of the Refuge System. The refuge law enforcement effort should be sufficient to protect human safety and fish populations, ensure compliance with regulations, and based on past experiences and current circumstances.

K. Special Events. We encourage refuge managers to set aside areas or times to promote fishing by youths, individuals with disabilities, or underrepresented groups. Refuge managers should take advantage of special events as opportunities to educate young anglers and their parents about the importance of fisheries management and the role of the Refuge System.

L. Special Regulation Fishing. We may offer special opportunities to a limited number of anglers in cases where there is a relatively small area of water to fish or we have a relatively low harvestable surplus of fish. Refuge managers may introduce a special use permit system in such cases.

M. Tournament Fishing. Well-planned fishing tournaments can promote recreational fishing opportunities on refuges and be a source of conservation information and education for the angler. We allow tournament fishing in the Refuge System when we make a determination that the event is compatible with refuge purpose(s) and the Refuge System mission. When issuing special use permits for fishing tournaments, refuge managers must consider the potential disturbance to wildlife and habitat and conflicts with other refuge visitors. A number of recreational fishing and conservation organizations have extensive experience planning fishing tournaments that avoid or minimize these potential conflicts. They can be valuable partners in planning compatible fishing tournaments. We use techniques such as limiting the number of participants, designating parking spaces for tournament participants, zoning areas for tournament fishing, limiting the number of tournament events, creating no-wake zones, and enforcing speed limits to plan successful tournaments. We strongly encourage refuge managers to consult State fish and wildlife conservation agencies and other conservation partners when considering and developing permit conditions for tournament fishing events. See the compatibility policy (603 FW 2) for additional information. This policy covers organized fishing tournaments and does not apply to small groups of family and friends that may organize informal fishing competitions that otherwise comply with all applicable Federal and State laws and regulations.

N. Unattended Tackle. We may allow the use of trotlines, setlines, gillnets, giglines, jug lines, soap lines, snaglines, and other unattended tackle if authorized by State fishing regulations and found to be compatible with refuge objectives. If implemented, we must strictly monitor the unattended tackle program, document the results, and assess the opportunity for future use. The only exception to this policy is found in ANILCA under subsistence uses.

O. Zoning Recreational Use. We can use zoning of tackle, boat types, or motor horsepower to help achieve a balance of allowed uses and to reduce conflicts between anglers and other users. We can also use zoning to provide

less competition for youth fishing events and provide opportunities for anglers with disabilities and those using methods that reduce fish mortality, such as catch and release.

3.8 How do you open a refuge to fishing? The refuge manager must submit a compatibility determination on fishing programs as described below:

A. To initiate or expand fishing programs, the Service must publish in the Federal Register any proposed and final refuge-specific regulations pertaining to that use prior to implementing or publishing them in refuge fishing brochures or other public documents. These regulations may include an entirely new fishing program, a new species not addressed in a previous opening package, or a new area(s) open to fishing not addressed in a previous opening package. Opening packages for new species or new areas may be waived only if the refuge manager makes an affirmative finding that all other policy requirements for compatibility, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act section 7 evaluation, etc., have been fully satisfied. Refuge-specific regulations must be supported by an approved opening package containing the elements described below. It must contain detailed information the public needs to know to avoid violating refuge rules. Use of signs and brochures may supplement the final refuge-specific regulations to notify the public of the final refuge-specific regulations. Refuge managers must forward all opening packages to the Regional Director/CNO Manager for approval before submission to the Refuges Federal Register liaison in Headquarters. The refuge is officially open to public fishing only after the effective date of the final rule (50 CFR 32.4), except in Alaska, where under ANILCA the refuge is automatically open to fishing activities. These regulations are only one element of a complete opening package, which is comprised of the following documents:

- (1) Fishing chapter of the visitor service plan (VSP);
- (2) Compatibility determination, which must include analysis of the availability of resources with which to administer the use;
- (3) NEPA documentation (categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or environmental impact statement);
- (4) Appropriate decision document (e.g., finding of no significant impact or record of decision);
- (5) Endangered Species Act section 7 evaluation;
- (6) Copies of letters requesting State and, where appropriate, tribal involvement and the results of the request;
- (7) Draft news release;
- (8) Outreach plan; and
- (9) Draft refuge-specific regulations.

B. Refuge managers must annually review their refuge-specific fishing regulations and the VSP to ensure continued compatibility and consistency of the visitor services program with existing laws and regulations. Refuge managers must submit any refuge-specific amendments (additions, deletions, or modifications) each year to their Regional/CNO office for review and notification of State fish and wildlife agencies when there are differences from State regulations. Major revisions in the VSP (e.g., addition of a new fishing activity) will be in the form of an amendment to the VSP. Refuge managers handle preparation and approval of amendments to the VSP the same as preparation and approval of the plan itself. Refuge managers should not submit changes for inclusion in the rulemaking process unless they have all approvals and other required documents. After Regional Director/CNO Manager approval, the Regional/CNO office sends that information to the Refuges Federal Register liaison in Headquarters, with the refuge-specific language, for inclusion in the rulemaking documents for publication in the Federal Register. We cannot publish a refuge opening without the complete opening package. Refuge-specific regulations should be standard and consistent in format throughout the Refuge System. The Refuges Federal Register liaison in Headquarters must receive this information by January 31 each year, unless otherwise requested by the Director, to allow sufficient time for compilation and review by affected Service program offices and the Office of the Solicitor. After receiving approval from these offices, the Headquarters Federal Register liaison will submit the proposed rule to the Director for approval. After required Departmental approval(s), we publish the proposed rule in the Federal Register with a 30-day public comment period. We include guidelines for preparing and submitting regulations and amendments below and in Exhibit 1.

(1) Guidelines for preparation of refuge-specific fishing regulations. There are three primary purposes for compliance with fishing regulations on refuges: conserving the resource, assisting in managing the resource, and ensuring safety. Generally, State fishing regulations provide the framework for meeting these three primary purposes. Refuge managers will make every effort to exhaust the State regulatory process. However, if State regulations do not completely address these criteria, refuge-specific regulations may be necessary. These regulations should focus primarily on management of the fish and wildlife resource and be enforceable. For example, if we require permits on a specific refuge, a statement that we require special refuge permits is all that is necessary. It is not appropriate to include details in the regulations. Address details in a leaflet or the permit application. Do not submit regulatory text for the refuge unless it represents a change to the existing language in 50 CFR 32. If you are adding conditions to those already published, state that these are additions and indicate where you want them inserted in the regulatory text. The refuge manager should work cooperatively with State fish and wildlife agencies to develop and implement refuge-specific regulations.

(2) Duplication of existing 50 CFR provisions. When writing regulations, check 50 CFR to avoid duplication. For example, section 27.31, restricts motor vehicles to “designated routes of travel . . . delineated on maps by the refuge manager;” section 27.95 prohibits setting fires; and section 32.2(j) addresses possession of alcohol.

(3) Duplication of State regulations. 50 CFR 32.5(c) states “Each person shall comply with applicable provisions of the laws and regulations of the State wherein any area is located unless further restricted by Federal law or regulation.” Further, 50 CFR 32.6(c) states “Refuge-specific fishing regulations will not liberalize existing State laws and regulations.” Therefore, do not repeat State creel limits, seasons, hours, etc., in the refuge-specific regulations where the State has concurrent jurisdiction. Refuge managers will address why refuge-specific regulations deviate from State laws and regulations in a cover memo to the appropriate Regional/CNO office representative and communicate the same information to the appropriate official in the State fish and wildlife agency. The preamble to the regulation should also include these explanations.

(4) Preparation of refuge-specific regulations. List tackle limits, creel limits, seasons, and hours that differ from the State’s in the refuge-specific regulations. Please use the example in Exhibit 1 for your submission for changes or additions to 50 CFR 32.

Examples for Preparing and Submitting Regulations

Use the following example to modify existing text:

Fishing:

§ 32.32 Illinois.

Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge

D. Sport Fishing.

Replace condition D.1. with the following:

We allow fishing on Lake Chautauqua from January 15 through October 15. We prohibit fishing in the waterfowl hunting area during waterfowl hunting season.

Delete condition D.2.

Renumber conditions D.3., D.4., and D.5., to become D.2., D.3., and D.4., respectively.

Use the following example to add a refuge that is opening for fishing for the first time:

§ 32.63 Texas.

Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge

D. Sport Fishing. We allow sport fishing on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with State regulations [if true] subject to the following conditions:

1. We only allow fishing at the three designated access sites on the Boca Chica tract.
2. We allow only pole and line, rod and reel, hand line, dip net, or cast net for fishing. Anglers must attend all fishing lines or other fishing devices.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
REFUGE MANAGEMENT**

Refuge Management

Part 605 Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

Chapter 4 Wildlife Observation

605 FW 4

4.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides the Service's policy governing the management of wildlife observation programs on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). In an effort to avoid redundancy, we have placed critical information and guidance for all wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation) in 605 FW 1. Read 605 FW 1 with this chapter for complete information for planning and implementation purposes.

4.2 What is the scope of this chapter? The policies contained in this chapter apply to recreational wildlife observation programs within the Refuge System. See 605 FW 1 and other chapters and regulations governing policies, guidelines, and procedures for additional information.

4.3 What is our policy regarding wildlife observation in the Refuge System?

A. The overarching goal of our wildlife-dependent recreation policy is to enhance opportunities and access to quality visitor experiences on refuges and to manage the refuge to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats (see 605 FW 1.6).

B. Wildlife observation is an appropriate use of the Refuge System when compatible. It is also a priority general public use of the Refuge System and should receive enhanced consideration over nonpriority uses. We strongly encourage refuge managers to provide visitors with quality wildlife observation opportunities when compatible. Wildlife observation programs can promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on all lands and waters in the Refuge System. We encourage refuge staff to develop and take full advantage of opportunities to work with other partners who have an interest in helping us promote quality wildlife observation programs on refuges.

4.4 What are the guiding principles of the Refuge System's wildlife observation program? The guiding principles of the System's wildlife observation programs are to:

A. Provide safe, enjoyable, and accessible wildlife viewing opportunities and facilities.

B. Promote visitor understanding of, and increase visitor appreciation for, America's natural resources.

C. Provide opportunities for quality recreational and educational experiences consistent with criteria describing quality found in 605 FW 1.6.

D. Minimize conflicts with visitors participating in other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation activities.

4.5 What authorities allow us to support wildlife observation in the Refuge System? See 605 FW 1.3 for laws and Executive orders that govern wildlife observation in the Refuge System.

4.6 How do we foster visitor stewardship in our wildlife observation programs? Refuge managers provide opportunities for visitors to observe wildlife, which can instill an appreciation for the value of and need for fish and wildlife habitat conservation. Refuges provide enhanced opportunities to view wildlife in their natural habitat by providing observation trails, platforms, viewing equipment, brochures, interpreters, viewing areas, and tour routes. Refuge managers should seek to develop partnerships with organizations that promote wildlife observation and that value wildlife resources. We encourage refuge managers to design local hands-on activities that inspire participants to become involved in habitat restoration and other outreach programs. These opportunities foster a sense of stewardship for the Refuge System, wildlife, and habitat resources through direct experience.

4.7 What are some examples of tools we can use to support our wildlife observation programs? Refuge managers should consider the following examples of tools as guidelines and continually use their creativity and ingenuity when providing opportunities that highlight the uniqueness of a particular refuge.

A. Developed Observation Sites. Developing specific areas for visitors to view wildlife enhances wildlife observation and limits the disturbance to wildlife and habitat. During the planning process, refuge managers should consider constructing viewing areas at sites less sensitive to the impacts of visitors. Developed observation sites provide a centralized area for visitors to receive information and education needed to produce a safe, quality experience. Examples of such developments include butterfly gardens, observation trails, boardwalks in wet areas, observation towers and platforms, blinds, vehicle pullouts, information kiosks, identification signs, and automobile tour routes. Refuge managers must weigh the benefits of wildlife observation enhancements with any changes in existing habitat as well as any potential harm to wildlife's life history requirements. If a potential facility modification for people with disabilities would cause harm to the setting's appearance, environmental features, or historic character, we will make efforts to allow alternative access.

B. Information. Information distribution is invaluable as a management tool as well as a means to promote wildlife observation opportunities. Information, distributed through various media, should communicate available wildlife observation opportunities, best viewing times, techniques that emphasize respect for wildlife by minimizing visitor impacts on wildlife, access point information, viewer etiquette, regulations, restrictions, management concerns, and management objectives. Examples of ways to provide information include bird/plant/mammal check lists, brochures, maps, books, Internet, CD-ROMs, DVDs, Watchable Wildlife recreation symbols, wildlife viewing guides, movies, slide shows, talks, guided walks, staffed information desks, roving interpreters, formal environmental education classes, teacher workshops, and interpretive exhibits. Distributing information is a way to direct visitor use to appropriate areas; provide managers with the opportunity to present the refuge, Refuge System, and Service messages to visitors; and foster visitor appreciation and stewardship. See 605 FW 7, Interpretation, for guidance on interpretive programs.

C. Specialized Equipment. In cases where direct wildlife viewing would be detrimental to sensitive species or habitats, refuge managers may develop facilities that provide remote viewing opportunities. Refuge managers may, for example, set up spotting scopes to provide remote viewing opportunities, offer audio opportunities for visitors to help identify wildlife they may not be able to see, and show videos during the optimum viewing seasons. Pictures from remote cameras linked with the Refuge System's electronic field trip programs and long-distance environmental learning projects can highlight wildlife management and refuge purpose(s). Photographs incorporated into interpretive signs show visitors wildlife and habitats they may encounter. We should consider specialized equipment as supplements to and not replacements for direct viewing opportunities. The refuge manager should consider using these techniques to provide opportunities that might otherwise be unavailable.

4.8 What tools can we use to evaluate and monitor wildlife observation programs?

A. Refuge managers must monitor and evaluate their wildlife observation programs regularly. Refuge managers should evaluate both the quality of the experience and the effects of the activity on refuge resources. A wide variety of evaluation and monitoring tools exist, including talking to and asking visitors how they rate their viewing experience, conducting an approved customer satisfaction survey, and monitoring wildlife behavior and habitat response near observation areas.

B. If a refuge manager decides to create a new survey to evaluate the visitor's experience on a specific refuge, he or she must follow approved information collection procedures and work with the Division of Policy and Directives Management to submit the required information to the Office of Management and Budget for approval. Approved surveys can be implemented by contract through universities or private companies.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
REFUGE MANAGEMENT**

Refuge Management

Part 605 Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

Chapter 5 Wildlife Photography

605 FW 5

5.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides the Service's policy governing the management of recreational wildlife photography programs on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). In an effort to avoid redundancy, we have placed critical information and guidance for all wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation) in 605 FW 1. Read 605 FW 1 with this chapter for complete information for planning and implementation purposes.

5.2 What is the scope of this chapter? The policies contained in this chapter apply to recreational wildlife photography programs within the Refuge System. See 605 FW 1 and other chapters and regulations governing policies, guidelines, and procedures for additional information. Refer to the administration of specialized and economic uses chapter in the Refuge Manual (RM) at 5 RM 17 and the audio-visual productions chapter (8 RM 16) for policies and procedures related to activities associated with professional guide services and commercial filming and news photography, respectively.

5.3 What is our policy regarding recreational wildlife photography in the Refuge System?

- A.** The overarching goal of our wildlife-dependent recreation policy is to enhance opportunities and access to quality visitor experiences on refuges and to manage the refuge to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats (see 605 FW 1.6).
- B.** Recreational wildlife photography is an appropriate use of the Refuge System when compatible. It is also a priority general public use of the Refuge System and should receive enhanced consideration over other nonpriority uses. We strongly encourage refuge managers to provide visitors with quality compatible recreational wildlife photography opportunities. Recreational wildlife photography programs will promote understanding and appreciation of natural resources and their management on all lands and waters in the Refuge System. We encourage refuge staff to develop and take full advantage of opportunities to work with other partners who have an interest in helping us promote quality wildlife photography programs on refuges.
- C.** We cover commercial photography permit requirements under the audio-visual productions chapter in the Refuge Manual (see 8 RM 16, 43 CFR 5.1, and 50 CFR 27.71) and also 5 RM 17, Administration of Specialized Uses. Commercial photography is prohibited without a valid special use permit.

5.4 What are the guiding principles of the Refuge System's wildlife photography programs? The guiding principles of the Refuge System's recreational wildlife photography programs are to:

- A.** Promote visitor understanding of, and increase visitor appreciation for, America's natural resources.
- B.** Provide safe, enjoyable, and accessible wildlife photography opportunities and facilities.
- C.** Provide opportunities for quality compatible recreational and educational experiences consistent with criteria describing quality found in 605 FW 1.6.
- D.** Minimize conflicts with visitors participating in other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation activities.

5.5 What authorities allow us to support wildlife photography in the Refuge System? See 605 FW 1.3, for laws and Executive orders that govern wildlife photography in the Refuge System.

5.6 What does the term 'commercial photography' mean? Commercial photography is a visual recording (motion or still) by firms or individuals (other than news media representatives) who intend to distribute their photographic content for money or other consideration. This includes the creation of educational, entertainment, or commercial enterprises as well as advertising audio-visuals for the purpose of paid product or services, publicity, and commercially oriented photo contests.

5.7 How do we foster public stewardship in our recreational wildlife photography programs? Refuge managers provide opportunities for visitors to photograph wildlife to instill an appreciation for the value of and need for fish and wildlife habitat conservation. Refuges provide enhanced opportunities to photograph wildlife in their natural habitat by providing platforms, brochures, interpreters, viewing areas, and tour routes. Refuge managers should seek to develop partnerships with organizations that promote wildlife photography and that value wildlife resources.

5.8 What are some examples of tools we can use to support our wildlife photography programs? The refuge manager should consider the following examples of tools as guidelines and continually use their creativity and ingenuity when providing opportunities that highlight the uniqueness of a particular refuge.

A. Developed Photography Sites. Developing specific areas for visitors to photograph wildlife enhances the opportunity for quality wildlife photography experiences and limits the area of disturbance to wildlife and habitat. During the planning process, refuge managers should work with visitor services professionals to locate and design facilities that minimize disturbance to wildlife and habitat and maintain a quality visitor experience. Developed photography sites provide a centralized area for visitors to photograph and create a safe, quality experience. Examples of such developments include trails, boardwalks in wet areas, photography platforms, blinds, vehicle pullouts, information kiosks, identification signs, and automobile tour routes. Refuge managers must weigh the benefits of enhancements to wildlife photography with any changes in existing habitat as well as any potential harm to wildlife's life history requirements. If a potential facility modification for people with disabilities would cause harm to the setting's appearance, environmental features, or historic character, we will make efforts to provide alternative access to the activity.

B. Information. Information distribution is an invaluable management tool as well as a means to promote wildlife photography opportunities. Information, distributed through various media, should communicate available wildlife photography opportunities, best viewing times, techniques that emphasize respect for wildlife through the minimization of visitor impacts on wildlife, access point information, photographer etiquette, regulations, restrictions, management concerns, and management objectives. Examples of ways to provide information include the Internet, bird/plant/mammal check lists, brochures, maps, books, and staffed information desks. Distributing information is a way to direct visitor use to appropriate areas; provide managers with the opportunity to present the refuge, Refuge System, and Service messages to visitors; and foster visitor appreciation and stewardship. See 605 FW 7, Interpretation, for guidance on interpretive programs.

C. Specialized Equipment or Facilities. In cases where direct wildlife photography would be detrimental to sensitive species or habitats, refuge managers may develop facilities that provide remote photography opportunities. Refuge managers may, for example, install wildlife photography blinds to shield sensitive wildlife from the human activity associated with photography. Refuge managers may also install remote video cameras in dens, nests, or hacking towers to allow photographers to obtain footage or still photographs of sensitive wildlife from off-site.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
REFUGE MANAGEMENT**

Refuge Management

Part 605 Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

Chapter 6 Environmental Education

605 FW 6

6.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides the Service's policy governing the management of environmental education programs on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). In an effort to avoid redundancy, we have placed critical information and guidance for all wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation) in 605 FW 1. Read 605 FW 1 with this chapter for complete information for planning and implementation purposes.

6.2 What is the scope of this chapter? The policies contained in this chapter apply to environmental education programs within the Refuge System. See 605 FW 1 and other chapters and regulations governing policies, guidelines, and procedures for additional information.

6.3 What is our policy regarding environmental education in the Refuge System?

A. The overarching goal of our wildlife-dependent recreation policy is to enhance opportunities and access to quality visitor experiences on refuges and to manage the refuge to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats (see 605 FW 1.6).

B. Environmental education is an appropriate use of the Refuge System when compatible. It is also a priority general public use of the Refuge System and should receive enhanced consideration over nonpriority uses. We strongly encourage refuge managers to provide quality environmental education programs when compatible. Environmental education programs can promote understanding and appreciation of natural and cultural resources and their management on all lands and waters in the Refuge System. We encourage refuge staff to develop and take full advantage of opportunities to work with volunteers and partners who have an interest in conducting quality environmental education programs on refuges.

6.4 What are the guiding principles for the Refuge System's environmental education programs? The guiding principles of the Refuge System's environmental education programs are to:

- A.** Teach awareness, understanding, and appreciation of our natural and cultural resources and conservation history.
- B.** Allow program participants to demonstrate learning through refuge-specific stewardship tasks and projects that they can carry over into their everyday lives.
- C.** Establish partnerships to support environmental education both on- and off-site.
- D.** Support local, State, and national educational standards through environmental education on refuges.
- E.** Assist refuge staff, volunteers, and other partners in obtaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities to support environmental education.
- F.** Provide appropriate materials, equipment, facilities, and study locations to support environmental education.
- G.** Give refuges a way to serve as role models in the community for environmental stewardship.
- H.** Minimize conflicts with visitors participating in other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation activities.

6.5 What authorities allow us to support environmental education in the Refuge System? See 605 FW 1.3 for laws and Executive orders that govern environmental education in the Refuge System.

6.6 What do these terms mean?

A. Course of Study. A course of study is an ordered process or succession, such as a number of lectures or other matter dealing with a subject, or a series of such courses constituting a curriculum. We design courses of study to meet national and State academic standards. Examples of courses of study that will meet the education objectives of the refuge and the visitor may include, but are not limited to: teacher professional development, community-based service organization programs, youth group merit badge requirements, summer camp themes, and elder hostel seminar objectives.

B. Curriculum. A curriculum is an adopted program for learning needed to achieve specific standards or goals. It includes a plan of instruction that details what students need to know, how they will learn it, what the instructor's role is, and the context in which the teaching and learning take place.

C. Educational Assistance. Educational assistance means environmental education expertise offered by Service staff to schools, other programs and offices, other Federal and State agencies, private organizations, and individuals, either on- or off-site.

D. Environmental Education. Environmental education is a process designed to teach citizens and visitors the history and importance of conservation and the biological and the scientific knowledge of our Nation's natural resources. Through this process, we can help develop a citizenry that has the awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, motivation, and commitment to work cooperatively towards the conservation of our Nation's environmental resources. Environmental education within the Refuge System incorporates on-site, off-site, and distance learning materials, activities, programs, and products that address the audience's course of study, refuge purpose(s), physical attributes, ecosystem dynamics, conservation strategies, and the Refuge System mission.

E. Outdoor Classrooms. Sites of structured environmental education activities that focus on the natural environment and cultural resources, come from an approved course of study with identified learner outcomes, and involve hands-on programs in the Refuge System.

6.7 How do we foster public stewardship in our environmental education programs? Refuge managers provide environmental education opportunities which can instill an appreciation for the value of and need for fish and wildlife habitat conservation. Refuges may provide enhanced environmental education program opportunities through indoor and outdoor classrooms. Refuge managers should develop partnerships with organizations that promote environmental education and value the conservation of natural and cultural resources. We encourage refuge managers to promote their refuge's uniqueness and address local issues within the context of the Refuge System mission. These opportunities foster a sense of stewardship for the Refuge System, fish and wildlife, and habitat resources through direct association.

6.8 What is the guidance we use to develop and implement environmental education programs? Refuges open to the public should strive to provide some level of environmental education. The environmental education opportunities we offer depend on available resources and staffing and must support the refuge's management purposes and objectives. We advance and support the Refuge System mission and goals by developing programs based on the following guidelines:

- A.** Connect people's lives to the natural world around them;
- B.** Advance environmental and scientific literacy through an interdisciplinary approach to learning;
- C.** Strengthen the Refuge System by fostering public knowledge about environmental conservation;
- D.** Help participants experience wildlife, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources;
- E.** Stress the role and importance of refuges in fish and wildlife conservation and emphasize the relationship between wildlife and their associated ecosystems; and
- F.** Instill a sense of stewardship and an understanding of our conservation history.

6.9 How do we support, plan, and develop environmental education programs?

A. Program Support. In consultation with Regional and California/Nevada Operations Office (CNO) visitor services chiefs, refuge managers plan, develop, and implement environmental education programs to increase visitors' knowledge and understanding and build community support for refuges.

B. Program Planning. We plan our environmental education programs by offering educational assistance and working closely with local school districts and community partners. We encourage an interdisciplinary approach that relies on existing curricula or a course of study involving natural and social sciences, history, and the arts by working with teachers, school districts, and partners. Each refuge manager should plan environmental education objectives and implementation strategies when developing a comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) or visitor services plan (VSP). Refuge managers analyze their environmental education program's objectives and develop an interim program if they are not scheduled to develop a CCP within 2 years. Refuge managers:

(1) Determine if current or proposed environmental education sites, programs, and activities are compatible with refuge purpose(s), approved refuge goals, and the Refuge System mission and goals;

(2) Identify staffing, funding, and other requirements of a quality environmental education program;

(3) Enhance our environmental education opportunities by working with volunteers and through partnerships with educators and others and by involving nontraditional audiences;

(4) Identify the resources for which the refuge was established, ecosystem characteristics, endangered species, wilderness, fish, wildlife, plants, and cultural resources that are key resource issues for each refuge. Working with educators, we use this assessment to identify target audiences and look for creative ways to tie resource priorities to local environmental education needs and curricula; and

(5) If possible, collect and update data identifying environmental educators, community resources, and history of use by educational groups.

C. Making Environmental Education Accessible. Meeting accessibility requirements presents the opportunity to provide better environmental education programs for everyone. Creating programs that are easily read and understood, developing facilities that are accessible to all people, and providing exhibits that contain audio or tactile elements can benefit everyone and provide multiple paths to learning.

6.10 How do we evaluate environmental education programs? We regularly evaluate environmental education programs to measure their effectiveness and to ensure that they meet the refuge's management and program objectives; the Refuge System mission; expectations for student and teacher learning experiences; and national, State, and local educational standards. This will help us determine if we are using program resources, funding, and staffing effectively. We evaluate environmental education programs in the following ways:

A. The refuge manager, with assistance from the Regional/CNO visitor services chief or program coordinator, will evaluate the refuge's environmental education program through development of the VSP and completion of visitor services field station reviews.

B. Refuge managers should evaluate the effectiveness of environmental education programs. This can be done by soliciting feedback from an educator after an environmental education class or field trip, pre- or post-testing for identified education concepts, self assessments completed by teachers and students, or by observing visitor behavioral changes over time. Depending upon the level of the environmental education program, the refuge manager may consider implementing more sophisticated evaluation tools to measure learning outcomes and concept retention. Regional/CNO visitor services chiefs and their staff can assist in developing and analyzing the results of these evaluation tools.

**FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
REFUGE MANAGEMENT**

Refuge Management

Part 605 Wildlife-Dependent Recreation

Chapter 7 Interpretation

605 FW 7

7.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides the Service's policy governing the management of interpretive programs on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System). In an effort to avoid redundancy, we have placed critical information and guidance for all wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation) in 605 FW 1. Read 605 FW 1 with this chapter for complete information for planning and implementation purposes.

7.2 What is the scope of this chapter? The policies contained in this chapter apply to interpretive programs within the Refuge System. See 605 FW 1 and other chapters and regulations governing policies, guidelines, and procedures for additional information.

7.3 What is our policy regarding interpretation in the Refuge System?

A. The overarching goal of our wildlife-dependent recreation policy is to enhance opportunities and access to quality visitor experiences on refuges and to manage the refuge to conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats (see 605 FW 1.6).

B. Interpretation is an appropriate use of the Refuge System when compatible. It is also a priority general public use of the Refuge System and should receive enhanced consideration over nonpriority uses. We strongly encourage refuge managers to provide quality interpretive opportunities and programs when compatible. Interpretive programs will promote understanding and appreciation of natural and cultural resources and their management on all lands and waters in the Refuge System. We encourage refuge staff to develop and take full advantage of opportunities to work with partners who have an interest in helping us promote quality interpretive programs on refuges.

7.4 What are the guiding principles of the Refuge System's interpretive programs? The guiding principles of the Refuge System's interpretive programs are to:

A. Promote visitor understanding of, and increase appreciation for, America's natural and cultural resources and conservation history by providing safe, informative, enjoyable, and accessible interpretive opportunities, products, and facilities;

B. Develop a sense of stewardship leading to actions and attitudes that reflect interest and respect for wildlife resources, cultural resources, and the environment;

C. Provide quality interpretive experiences that help people understand and appreciate the individual refuge and its role in the Refuge System;

D. Provide opportunities for quality recreational and interpretive experiences consistent with criteria describing quality found in 605 FW 1.6;

E. Assist refuge staff, volunteers, and community support groups in attaining knowledge, skills, and abilities in support of interpretation; and

F. Minimize conflicts with visitors participating in other compatible wildlife-dependent recreational activities.

7.5 What authorities allow us to support interpretation in the Refuge System? See 605 FW 1.3 for laws and Executive orders that govern interpretation in the Refuge System.

7.6 What do these terms mean?

A. Interpretation. A communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the audience and the resource.

B. Interpretive Objectives. Desired, measurable outcomes of an interpretive program.

C. Interpretive Programs. Activities, talks, publications, audio-visual media, signs, and exhibits that convey key natural and cultural resource messages to visitors.

D. Interpretive Theme Statements. Tools that cohesively develop an idea or ideas. Interpretive theme statements express meaning, link a tangible resource to its intangible meanings, and organize interpretive programs. An example of an interpretive theme statement is: "Human interaction with wildlife not only affords opportunities for personal exploration and understanding, but also fundamental research that improves the management of wildlife and their habitat."

7.7 What is the role of interpretation? As one of the six wildlife-dependent recreational uses of the Refuge System, interpretation provides opportunities for visitors to make their own connections to the resource. By providing opportunities to connect to the resource, interpretation provokes participation in resource stewardship. It helps refuge visitors understand their relationships to, and impacts on, those resources.

7.8 Why should we include interpretive planning in a visitor services plan (VSP)? We are involved in interpretive planning for the following reasons:

A. Interpretive planning helps focus staff time, funding, and other resources on primary interpretive theme statements and provides focus and direction to interpretive programs. Planning can also help set field station and funding priorities and help identify partnership opportunities.

B. When we develop VSPs, they become the basis for the development of future programs and services. New activities should always relate to and support the interpretive theme statements developed in the refuge VSP.

7.9 What are the standards and requirements for interpretive programs? When we develop interpretive programs, we use the following:

A. Principles of Interpretation. We develop interpretive programs and products that reflect principles of interpretation in the Service's Interpretative Development Model (see <http://training.fws.gov/deo>). Our interpretive programs link the resources of the Refuge System and the specific refuge with the concepts and values visitors bring to our sites. Through interpretation, we strive to:

(1) Relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor. Interpretation helps provide meaningful context.

(2) Reveal key themes and concepts to visitors based on information. Information, as such, is not interpretation. However, all interpretation includes information.

(3) Inspire and develop curiosity, not just instruct.

(4) Relate enough of the story to introduce concepts and ideas and pique visitor interest, discussion, and investigation so that visitors will develop their own conclusions.

(5) Organize activities around theme statements.

B. Interpretation as a Management Tool. Well-designed interpretive programs can be effective resource management tools. For many visitors, taking part in an interpretive program may be their primary contact with a refuge, the Refuge System, and the Service. It is their chance to find out about refuge resource management objectives and could be their first contact with conservation and wildlife. Through these contacts, we have the opportunity to influence visitor attitudes about natural resources, refuges, the Refuge System, and the Service and to influence visitor behavior when visiting units of the Refuge System. Interpretive planning and subsequent activities and products can:

(1) Provide opportunities for visitors to become interested in, learn about, and understand natural and cultural resource management and our fish and wildlife conservation history;

(2) Help visitors understand their role within the natural world;

- (3) Communicate rules and regulations to visitors, thereby promoting understanding and compliance to solve or prevent potential management problems;
- (4) Help us make management decisions and build visitor support by providing insight into management practices; and
- (5) Help visitors enjoy quality wildlife experiences on the refuge.

C. Why We Should Make Interpretation Accessible. Meeting accessibility requirements gives us the opportunity to provide better interpretive programs for everyone. Creating programs that are easily read and understood, developing facilities that are accessible to all people, and providing exhibits that contain audio or tactile elements can benefit everyone through multiple paths to learning.

7.10 What delivery methods do we use for interpretive activities? We provide a variety of interpretive programs and opportunities that appeal to a broad spectrum of interests and learning styles. There are two broad categories of interpretive activities: self-guided and personal services. Self-guided interpretation includes publications, signs, exhibits, and audio-visual media. Personal service includes activities such as guided talks and tours, group presentations, and special events. We strive for:

- A. Quality, self-guided services, because they reach a larger audience, are more readily available, and visitors can use them at their own pace;
- B. Quality personal contact to initiate discussion and answer questions; and
- C. A variety of interpretive experiences that appeal to varying audiences, visitor interests, and learning styles.

7.11 What guidelines do we use for effective interpretation? We will develop interpretive programs and products that reflect the principles of interpretation set forth in the Service's Interpretive Development Model. Following are interpretive media available to us:

- A. Self-guided products designed for the site and audience. The Regional and California/Nevada Operations Office (CNO) visitor services chief and program coordinators can assist with planning, design, and contracting for production of self-guided products.
- B. Brochures and publications that we design following the Service Graphic Standards for Publications. The Government Printing Office (GPO) does our printing and duplication. Regional/CNO printing coordinators must approve requests to use a commercial source instead of GPO.

7.12 How do we evaluate our interpretive programs?

- A. We evaluate interpretive programs to measure their effectiveness. Evaluations should be performed regularly and should measure both the quality of the resource experience and the effects of the activity on refuge resources. This will help us determine if we use program resources (including funding and staffing) effectively. When we are developing a program, we use evaluation measures that focus on desired results and involve techniques that improve outcomes. At the end of an interpretive project or program, we evaluate final outcomes and determine if we met program and participant objectives. We must tie our evaluations to Service priorities, objectives, funding, and staffing.
- B. Evaluations should be a part of visitor use field station reviews, and they should measure our effectiveness in interpreting the refuge's resources. A wide variety of evaluation tools exist, from asking visitors how they rate their interpretive experience to distributing an approved customer satisfaction survey. If more detailed information is needed, a refuge may contract with a university or private company to conduct a formal survey. If a refuge manager decides to create a new visitor-oriented survey to evaluate the visitor's experience, he or she must follow approved information collection procedures and work with the Division of Policy and Directives Management in Headquarters to submit the required information to the Office of Management and Budget for approval.