

Environmental Assessment

Seney National Wildlife Refuge Structural Improvements to the Show Pool Historic Wildlife Observation/Picnic Shelter (Show Pool Shelter)

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Prepared by

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Executive Summary

This environmental assessment evaluates two action alternatives and a no action alternative. The proposed action would complete structural improvements to a historic shelter known as the Show Pool Shelter at the Seney National Wildlife Refuge. The proposed action would be achieved by taking action to address the purpose and need for action to adverse effects to the shelter occur based on weathering and woodpecker damage to the structure meeting refuge visitor engagement strategies and considering the continued use of the tribal inspired architecture out of respect to tribal nations. The no action alternative would result in continued protection of the shelter by replacing deteriorated materials with in-kind or similar looking materials to ensure the shelter remains structurally sound and that the remaining historic integrity of the building meets the National Register of Historic Places standards.

This environmental assessment examines the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed action and complies with the National Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality NEPA regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations, or CFR, 1500-1508), the Department of the Interior NEPA regulations (43 CFR 46; 516 Department Manual, or DM, 8), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policies (550 Service manual, or FW, 3) and other relevant regulations and requirements. NEPA requires examination of the effects of proposed actions on the natural and human environment.

The following resources were analyzed in the environmental assessment: terrestrial wildlife and aquatic species, threatened and endangered species, visitor use and experience, cultural resources, land use on the refuge, administration of the refuge, local and regional economies, and environmental justice (see the Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences section for more information). Several other resources were initially considered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including geology and soils, air quality, water quality, habitat and vegetation, floodplains, and wilderness or other special designation, but were ultimately dismissed from further analysis because neither the proposed action nor its alternatives would have the potential to result in measurable impacts to these resources.

Based on the analysis presented in the environmental assessment and coordination and/or consultation with all appropriate federal, state and local agencies as well as all pertinent federally recognized Native American tribes, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service has determined that the impacts associated with the proposed action and its alternative would not individually or cumulatively have a significant impact on the quality of the natural and human environment. See Appendix E for Finding of No Significant Impact.

The draft EA was made available for public comment from July 25, 2022 through September 8, 2022 for 45-days. Public comments and agency responses are available in Appendix D of this environmental assessment. Substantive comments are addressed in this final environmental assessment. Any action put forth in this Final Environmental Assessment must meet Section 106 requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act. To meet these requirements consultation with required parties occurred during the Environmental Assessment process. A final determination on action cannot occur without completion of the Section 106 process and as such the decision could not be finalized until a Memorandum of Agreement was developed. Development of this MOA along with additional coordination on threatened and endangered species delayed making a final decision on the selection of an action for this project. A timeline extension pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, 42 U.S.C. § 4336a(g)(2) was approved on May 3, 2024 and considered to be the minimum necessary time to complete an environmental assessment given the project details.

Environmental Assessment for Structural Improvements to Seney National Wildlife Refuge's Show Pool Shelter

This Environmental Assessment evaluates the effects associated with the proposed action and complies with the National Environmental Policy Act in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500-1509) and Department of the Interior (43 CFR 46; 516 DM 8) and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (550 FW 3) regulations and policies. The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires examination of the effects of proposed actions on the natural and human environment.

Proposed Action

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) looks to complete structural improvements to a historic shelter in accordance with the Seney National Wildlife Refuge's 2009 Comprehensive Conservation Plan and 2015 Visitor Services Plan. The structure was traditionally known as the Wigwams. The name was changed to the Show Pool Shelter in 2018 and will be referred to with this name throughout the document. To meet the National Historic Preservation Act requirements the Service must give consideration of potential adverse impacts to the historical integrity of the structure that needs critical repairs to the deteriorating and damaged roof. The Service is reevaluating the continued use of the Tribal inspired architecture and proposes to alter the structure to better align with the refuge system mission and goal to provide higher quality recreational experiences for visitors. The Service proposes to change the design of the structure to provide more visibility for wildlife observation from within the structure while continuing to offer a shelter for visitors at the site to rest, eat and escape from rain and direct sunlight. The shelter is located at the Show Pool Public Access Area off of M-77, just north of the Refuge Entrance Road.

A proposed action may evolve during the NEPA process as the agency refines its proposal and gathers feedback from the public, Tribes, and other agencies. Therefore, the final proposed action may be different from the original. In this instance, the proposed action from draft to final environmental assessment remains relatively unchanged but has been updated after further investigation and inspection of existing structural materials that could be retained with the

alterations based on professional judgement of engineers considering safety and construction factors and coordination with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office.

Background

Refuge History

National wildlife refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (System), the purposes of an individual refuge, Service policy, laws, international treaties and executive orders. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Fish and Wildlife Service Manual. See Appendix A for a list of relevant laws and regulations.

The Seney National Waterfowl Refuge was established in 1935 (renamed the Seney National Wildlife Refuge in 1937) under the following refuge purposes:

- ...as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife... (Executive Order 7246, dated Dec. 10, 1935)
- ... for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds (16 U.S.C. § 715d, Migratory Bird Conservation Act)
- ... conservation, management, and restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans...(16 U.S.C. § 668dd(a)(2) (National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act)

The 1970 Omnibus Wilderness Act (Public Law 91-504) also designated 25,150 acres as the Seney Wilderness, to be managed as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. “The Wilderness Act of 1964 (Public Law 88- 577) created an additional purpose for Seney National Wildlife Refuge. Section 2(a) of the Wilderness Act states in part that “...it is hereby declared to be the intent of Congress to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness ...” and designated wilderness areas are to be managed “...for the use and enjoyment of the American people in such manner as will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness, and so as to provide for the protection of these areas, the preservation of their wilderness character, and for the gathering and dissemination of information regarding their use

and enjoyment as wilderness.” The proposed action does not occur within the Wilderness Area of the refuge.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, as outlined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), is “... to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and, where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans”

Additionally, the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the System (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4)) for:

- providing for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the System;
- ensuring that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the System are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- ensuring that the mission of the System described at 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;
- ensuring effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the states in which the units of the System are located;
- assisting in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the System and the purposes of each refuge;
- recognizing compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the System through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- ensuring that opportunities are provided within the System for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses; and
- monitoring the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

Seney National Wildlife Refuge is within the 1836 Treaty boundary, a treaty that was signed between the federal government and Anishinaabe Tribes including: the Bay Mills Indian Community, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of the Chippewa Indians, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little River Band Ottawa Indians

and Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians. The 1836 Treaty in addition to several federal laws, government orders, and agency policy direct the Service to work together with Tribal Nations to improve and enhance conservation of fish and wildlife resources and shared natural and cultural resource goals and objectives. See Appendix A for additional information about statutes and executive orders related to working with Tribal Nations. Additionally, the Service shall meaningfully involve and work collaboratively with tribal governments on actions when determined the actions may affect Native American cultural or religious interests.

Show Pool Shelter History and Background

The unique architecture and high visibility from the well-traveled state highway M-77 has made the shelter at Seney National Wildlife Refuge iconic to the refuge for many visitors and local community members, who often refer to them as the “Teepees”. The shelter sits on a 1.4-acre public access area that includes several picnic tables and grills, an outhouse, information kiosk and foot trails along the two wetland impoundments, North Show Pool and South Show Pool. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built many of the refuge’s first structures, including the Show Pool Shelter that was finished in 1938 (Johnson, 1938).

Like many “Roadside Americana” attractions from the Great Depression era, the design aesthetics were in the tradition of incorporating unique representations of regional flavor and design and Native American iconography. Although there have been alterations to the shelter over the years, it retains much of its historical integrity and is a significant contribution to the refuge’s eligibility as a potential historic district and protection under the National Historic Preservation Act.

The shelter is visible from M-77 and is one of the only structures visible for miles, it draws the public’s attention and curiosity. The Show Pool Access Area remains popular for tourists and anglers alike. Many people have fond memories of spending time there in their youth and continue the tradition with families of their own. Today the site’s purpose is to invite visitors to stop, promote wildlife observation, provide a picnic area, host environmental education opportunities, and inspire visitors to connect with the refuge’s natural and cultural history.

Purpose and Need for the Action

The general purpose of this action is to give consideration of potential adverse impacts to the historical integrity of the structure that needs structural repairs,

improve opportunities for wildlife observation, improve visitor experience, reduce unauthorized use inside the structure and consider the appropriateness of the architecture inspired from Native American culture. This action will further the Service's goals for enhancing the enjoyment and appreciation of the refuge's natural and cultural heritage and align with the refuge's mission and purpose. Currently, the existing historic Show Pool Shelter is deteriorating from woodpecker and insect damage, and the Service has been awarded funding from the Great American Outdoors Act to improve the shelter and public access area. Attention to the structure is necessary to initiate proper compliance and consideration to the National Historic Preservation Act. The Show Pool Shelter is a contributing asset to the proposed Seney National Wildlife Refuge Historic District and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The purpose and uses of the shelter are multifaceted. The refuge is large, and visitors can easily spend all day exploring the roads and trails. The structure offers a place for visitors to sit at tables and find some relief from uncomfortable weather which enables them to extend their stay before retreating to their vehicles or hiking back to the headquarters site. The trails connect to the main headquarters site and visitor center location, while also offering another destination location for visitors interested in exploring as much of the refuge as they can. For visitors exploring multiple access sites of the refuge, this location is one of two that offers a place to rest and eat, and if necessary, find some protection against rain or direct sunlight while still enjoying the natural landscape and wildlife. For the incidental user, it offers an easy and highly visible public access area to introduce visitors to the refuge.

The site has a history with people using it to gather with family and friends, share food as they cook on the grills around the shelter and have meaningful experiences that enhances their emotional connection to the site. In addition to these purposes, the Visitor Services Plan calls for the site to serve as a location to host environmental education groups as well as eventually offer an observation deck and fishing platform.

Despite the designer's hopes, since being built the shelter has never been sufficiently conducive to wildlife observation in the pools while sitting inside (the fact that the rear windows and side doors were added in the 1940s and 1950s as an aid to observation is a testament to this problem). People tend to use the tables outside the shelter more often for this purpose. In recent years, the refuge staff have found that people use the opaque structure to camp overnight, use it as a

toilet or leave trash behind. The enclosed nature of the structure and many angled support posts makes it feel cramped as well. It is not ideal for hosting environmental education groups or groups recreating as it is difficult to move around the picnic tables or host more than a few individuals.

An additional purpose of this project is to reevaluate the continued use of the tribal inspired architecture out of respect to tribal nations and within the intent of Service policy 510 FW 1 aimed at strengthening government-to-government relationships with Tribes. The original appearance is taken from tribal cultures and is not symbolic of a typical authentic Anishinaabek wigwam used in this region as the original name implies. When working with Bay Mills Indian Community and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of the Chippewa Indians on other projects, tribal staff were informally asked for input on how the agency should address the Show Pool Shelter. It was suggested at that time we change the name since the structures were not and did not look like wigwams. Comments have indicated that the shape may be offensive to some tribal members, but likely not all. Rather, the conical components resemble traditional teepees, which were the homes of the nomadic Tribes of the Great Plains and not known to occupy this region. Formal scoping occurred in April of 2021 when letters were sent via email to all tribal historic preservation officers and wildlife biologists within the 1836 Treaty ceded territory. Despite follow-up conversations with a few tribal members, no official tribal government recommendations were made during the scoping and review process.

When this structure was built, the country was becoming enamored with Native American culture through Hollywood movies and frequently utilized Native American symbols without context or consultation with Tribes. As we look towards the future the Service feels it is important to recognize the role this structure might play in negative stereotypes and understand they conflict with the Service's efforts to build stronger relationships with Tribes as described in the Service's 510 FW 1 and Department of Interior Native American Policies.

The need of the proposed action is to meet the Service's priorities and mandates as outlined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administrative Act to ensure the purposes of each refuge are carried out (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4)) by:

- providing increased opportunities for families to experience compatible wildlife-dependent recreation, particularly opportunities for parents and their children to safely engage in traditional outdoor activities, such as fishing and hunting;

- ensuring effective coordination, interaction, and cooperation with owners of land adjoining refuges and the fish and wildlife agency of the states in which the units of the System are located.

Furthermore, the need of the proposed action is to meet legal mandates under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) given the protected status of the Shelter. The Service determines how historic properties might be affected by the project and whether any of those effects would be considered adverse as defined under the NHPA. “Adverse effects” are those that diminish characteristics qualifying a property for inclusion in the National Register. This is done in consultation with other participants in the review. Proposed mitigation measures were developed with the State Historic Preservation Office during the public review period to address adverse effects of alternatives based on proposed treatments applied. Treatments applied in alternatives meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings (2017) considering the economic and technical feasibility of each alternative.

The need for the proposed action aligns with the goals and objectives in the 2009 Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Although the work is not expressly outlined in the Comprehensive Conservation Plan it identifies objectives and strategies that show a continued effort to support the access point including recreation structures. Additionally, the step-down Visitor Services Plan calls for the following:

- Strategy 6.7: Utilize the YCC building, Show Pool Shelter Access Area and pavilion for environmental education classrooms.
- Strategy 6.8: Provide and maintain tables for programs and nature study at the Environmental Education Pavilion and the Show Pool Shelter Access Area.
- The Visitor Services Plan also states, “Because of its historical significance and unique design, all efforts should be made to maintain this structure and its historic integrity.”

The Visitor Services Plan expressly supports the continued maintenance and protection of historical integrity of the Show Pool Shelter when practicable.

Alternatives

Alternative A – Continue Current Management – [No Action Alternative]

This alternative consists of continuing current management of the Show Pool Shelter as it appears. See photographs of the building through the years in Appendix B. Deteriorated materials would be replaced with in-kind or similar looking materials to ensure the shelter remains structurally sound and that the remaining historic integrity of the building meets the National Register of Historic Places standards.

Initial maintenance to address deteriorated materials work would involve replacing the cedar shake roof, replacing any rotten log timbers in the frame or other wooden structural features, staining all lumber components, maintenance and repair of existing concrete floor foundation, cleaning and repairing the stone fireplace and repairing any other current deficiencies found upon further inspection. Interpretive panels are present on the stone fireplace and would be upgraded as appropriate and needed. Additional regulatory, interpretational, and orientation signage in the vicinity of the structure would be upgraded and could reflect the Works Progress Administration (WPA)/Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) history in developing the refuge.

The fireplace would remain closed/inoperable for cooking. This is the same for all alternatives.

Initial repairs would take approximately 1-3 months to complete and may occur in phases as funding and workers are available, starting as early as possible upon a decision being made. Long term routine maintenance would involve monthly site inspections and mitigation for damage to the structure caused from pests, severe weather, or visitors as well as routine litter clean up and concrete cleaning. Eventually, the structure will require repainting again, a new roof, and perhaps concrete and stone repairs.

To provide for visitor and worker safety and site security during maintenance, demolition, and/or construction activities, the shelter and parking area would be closed to visitors. The site may be temporarily reopened between phases of work when visitor safety, worker safety, or site security is not at risk. Once initial repairs are complete, long term maintenance closures would range from a couple hours for

minor repairs and up to several weeks for more extensive projects that may become necessary. This is the same across all alternatives.

When the site reopens and if other refuge access sites are closed, it will likely get more visitation. However, this visitation is not likely to increase substantially due to the small size of the site and limited site amenities. There are only four picnic sites outside of the shelter, one single toilet outhouse and a small parking lot supporting less than 10 vehicles. Increases in visitation at the Show Pool Shelter Site due to other refuge closures would also be short term and likely subside when other access areas reopen. This is the same for all alternatives.

Alternative B – Remove Walls and Conical Roofs (preferred alternative)

Under this preferred alternative, the Service proposes to remove the conical roof tops and walls of the Show Pool Shelter while retaining the stone fireplace and incorporating it into a new roof supported with round log materials like the original logs. The existing concrete floor foundation would be redone and exterior damage to the stone fireplace would be repaired. Initial repairs would take approximately 1-6 months to complete and may occur in phases as funding and workers are available. This alternative would include work on the shelter as soon as possible in 2024 but may be delayed with construction starting in 2025. Long term routine maintenance would be like Alternative A.

Changes to the structural framing will require architectural engineering to design alterations that are structurally sound. The look and feel of the central portion of the roof with open rafters and whole logs would remain similar appearing. The goal is to provide a covered open space to be better utilized for wildlife observation, environmental education programs, law enforcement compliance and a better-quality experience for the public. The look of the modified structure has not been finalized and may include keeping a few angled support posts at either end as a legacy to the original teepee construction or by adding a wind break and/or additional interpretive panels to new vertical end posts. See two possible concept sketches in Appendix B. Once the construction plans based on engineering considerations and feasibility have been developed, the refuge will announce the specific duration and timing of any closures.

This alternative offers a compromise that will maintain some of the historical characteristics representing WPA and CCC significance of the structure while

improving experience and access for wildlife-dependent recreational activities and eliminating problematic design for refuge compliance and cultural sensitivities.

This alternative fulfills the Service's mandate under the National Wildlife Refuge System Administrative Act. The Service has determined that removing the conical portions of the Show Pool Shelter (Alternative B) is compatible with the purposes of Seney National Wildlife Refuge and the mission of the System.

Alternative C – Retain Conical Base but Remove Cone Tops

This alternative consists of altering the framework of the shelter so that it remains unique but has less resemblance to teepees. This alternative would consist of removing the cones from the roofline and retaining the conical base and original framing. This alternative retains the greatest amount of original construction from the WPA/CCC period of refuge development. This would include restoring an open viewing window that has since been closed for each conical component. New materials would be similar to those used currently. Interpretive panels are present on the stone fireplace and would be upgraded as appropriate and needed. Additional interpretational and orientation signage in the vicinity of the structure would be upgraded and could reflect the WPA/CCC history in developing the refuge. See a concept sketch in Appendix B.

Project duration and timing would be like Alternative B.

Alternative(s) Considered, But Dismissed from Further Consideration

Alternatives considered but dismissed include restoring the shelter to its original design and appearance which strongly resembles teepees of the nomadic Tribes of the Great Plains (see Appendix B for 1937 photo). This option would not meet the purpose to improve wildlife observation, visitor experience, or reduce unauthorized uses. Additionally, it appears to have limited lighting, only one exit and it is unclear if it had any transparent windows for wildlife observation. Window and door alterations that were done not long after the structure was built support the idea that the original structure design was not optimal nor the materials durable and cost effective. Additionally, this design is not representative of the local tribes that utilized the refuge lands historically and continue to do so today.

Demolishing the entire structure was considered but dismissed as it would not meet the purposes and needs of the project to continue to offer recreational opportunities currently available at the site - a place for visitors to rest, eat,

observe wildlife and escape from rain or direct sun. Additionally, it would clearly be an unnecessary significant adverse effect to the historic structure. Lastly, it would not further the objectives and strategies identified in the visitor services plan for this site.

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

This section is organized by affected resource categories and for each affected resource discusses both (1) the existing environmental and socioeconomic baseline in the action area for each resource and (2) the effects and impacts of the proposed action and any alternatives on each resource. The effects and impacts of the proposed action considered here are changes to the human environment, whether adverse or beneficial, that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship to the proposed action or alternatives. Impact types included in each section include direct effects, indirect effects and cumulative impacts. Direct effects are those which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place. Indirect effects are those which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance but are still reasonably foreseeable. Cumulative impacts result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts are presented under each affected resource in both the alternatives analysis and the environment trends and planned act section.

This Environmental Assessment includes the written analyses of the environmental consequences on a resource only when the impacts on that resource could be more than negligible and therefore considered an “affected resource.” Any resources that will not be more than negligibly impacted by the action have been dismissed from further analyses. The following resources either (1) do not exist within the project area or (2) would either not be affected or only negligibly affected by the proposed action: geology and soils, air quality, water quality, habitat and vegetation, floodplains, and wilderness or other special designation. Geology and soils are not present within the Show Pool Shelter itself and effects on the surrounding site are similar to what they currently are and would remain negligible. Air quality would remain as it currently is at the site. The project area including the area that could be temporarily disturbed from construction activities will not affect habitat or vegetation. The Show Pool Shelter is not in a floodplain, wilderness or special

designation area. The Seney Wilderness boundary is approximately 9.5 miles from the Show Pool Shelter. The refuge contains several Research Natural Areas, Public Use Natural Areas and the Strangmoor Bog National Landmark, however the Show Pool Shelter is not within or adjacent to these special designation areas. The Whitefish Point Unit is designated as an Audubon Important Bird Area but is well over 50 miles from the Show Pool Shelter site.

Summary of Affected Environment

Seney National Wildlife Refuge is primarily a mosaic of wetland and forested habitats. The refuge consists of approximately 148 square miles in Schoolcraft County, Michigan. (See map at Appendix C).

The proposed action is located in Unit 1 along the refuge's eastern boundary of state highway M-77 between the North and South Show Pools. (See map of the general area and proposed project site on the refuge at Appendix C).

For more information regarding the general characteristics of the refuge's environment, please see section 3 of the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan, which can be found here: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ServCat/DownloadFile/1479>.

For more information on the environmental consequences of the proposed action with regards to the project site in general, see the Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact here: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ServCat/DownloadFile/169001>. Therefore, this Environmental Assessment tiers from that Environmental Assessment and provides additional specific analysis of the proposed action.

In 2022, the refuge received funding to address deferred maintenance of several facilities. These projects were determined to fall within the framework of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment decision Finding of No Significant Impact and/or within agency categorical exclusions involving routine maintenance and repair (43 CFR 46.210 and 516 DM 8.5B2). They are not further evaluated here but are described below to consider the added cumulative effects the proposed project may have. These projects will be collectively referred to as "the Great American Outdoor Act deferred maintenance projects" throughout the rest of this document.

- A new combined administrative and visitor center building will replace the current facilities. The campus surrounding the new headquarters building

will be altered with upgrading parking, walkways, and landscaping for the new building and site. The Refuge Entrance Road will be resurfaced.

- The Pine Ridge Nature Trail is scheduled for repairs and upgrades.
- Four bridge repairs will be completed on the Marshland Wildlife Drive and Fishing Loop beginning in April of 2022 and expected to be completed by the end of November of 2022.
- In addition to addressing the shelter, the Show Pool Access Area will see improvements. A new wheelchair accessible outhouse was installed during the summer of 2022. This replaced the current outhouse which was removed and the vault filled. The parking area was renovated and expanded slightly. The driveway was truncated ending at the parking lot and the portion that wraps around the west side of the Show Pool Shelter was removed to prevent cars from driving round the structure and disturbing or blocking the view of the natural areas. An accessible parking space will be added to the site as well as wheelchair accessible picnic tables, grills and walkways upon completion of the shelter construction.
- Lastly, the North Show Pool dike was breached in April of 2018 and was repaired in the summer of 2022.

Natural Resources

Terrestrial Wildlife and Aquatic Species

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The refuge is widely known for supporting an abundance and diversity of wildlife and aquatic species. More than 200 species of birds, 26 species of fish, 50 species of mammals, 22 species of reptiles and amphibians, and 420 plant species have been recorded. The most current refuge species list is available online at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/seney/species>.

The upland site where the shelter is located is primarily developed for visitors and likely gets terrestrial wildlife use from species willing to tolerate the routine disturbance during the spring, summer and fall when visitor use is highest. Various nesting bird species such as American robin, downy woodpecker or black-capped chickadee may utilize the trees and shrubs scattered among the site. The shelter itself gets occasional use from wildlife such as squirrels, mice or insects taking

shelter in the structure. Additionally, one may encounter a garter snake basking on the concrete foundation. Woodpeckers have caused significant damage from pecking at the wooden roof shakes, beams and ceiling to access insects that have made them home. Birds such as phoebes, starlings or robins may attempt to nest on the structure and can easily be spotted if present. Bats or indications of bats have not been observed suggesting their use of the structure. Adjacent to the project area are the wetlands in the North and South Show Pools which host a variety of migrant and non-migrant wetland birds including trumpeter swans, Canada geese, wood ducks and other water birds. Other common wildlife species groups utilizing the wetland edge and associated shrub habitat include perching birds such as yellow warblers, kingbirds or gray catbirds to name a few. The wetlands also host small mammals including beaver and otter as well as various reptiles and amphibians.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

The changes proposed for the Show Pool Shelter would not increase or alter the footprint of the structure nor would it change the number of visitors predicted for this specific site. We do not anticipate long-term changes to the site that would affect terrestrial and aquatic species. The action will not include temporary or permanent lighting of roadway(s), facility(ies), and/or parking lot(s). The actions proposed in this plan are not expected to significantly change the current use of the access area. The Show Pool Shelter has stood on the site for decades and has varied in visitation from as low as 300 to just over 16,000 visitors per year. For the past 11 years the average number of visits per year is 7,706 and we expect the numbers to range from 6,500 to 11,000 most years. Since visitor numbers are not expected to change for the Show Pool Shelter access, current levels of noise and wildlife disturbance should remain like past years which has not been determined to have significant impacts to wildlife for past actions.

With regards to planned actions in or adjacent to the project area, management direction for Seney National Wildlife Refuge in general aims to preserve, conserve, and (where and when appropriate) restore the diversity of wildlife native to the Eastern Upper Peninsula of Michigan, with an emphasis on regional conservation priority species. The Show Pool Shelter access is located in Unit one of the refuge where management focuses on conserving existing habitats and contains several manmade pools to promote successful nesting of common loons, trumpeter swans, osprey, and other native wildlife.

This project will not have an adverse cumulative effect on terrestrial and aquatic wildlife in consideration to the other refuge Great American Outdoor Act deferred maintenance projects occurring during throughout the lifecycle of this project. The Service is not aware of any other specific planned actions in or adjacent to the project area from private, state, or local governments that could affect terrestrial and aquatic species using this site.

Climate change is generally expected to cause changes in habitats, communities and plant and animal species ranges. In 2019, Audubon related bird observations coupled with models to capture unique composition of each species suitable range under current climate and vegetation were mapped. Then using estimated projected range loss and gain from 2°C mean temperature rise worldwide, future ranges were mapped and compared between 2010 and 2050 projections. The results indicated a turnover change in species at the refuge of 36%. The refuge may become or remain home to 66 species that stand to lose much more of their range than they have the potential to gain. While 24 new refuge species may find suitable conditions at the refuge, 42 species may become extirpated from the refuge during the summers by 2050 (USFWS, 2019). The refuge's 2016 Inventory and Monitoring Plan identifies monitoring of wildlife. Adjustments in refuge management direction may be necessary over the course of time to adapt to a changing climate.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

Short term minor impacts to wildlife and aquatic species include disturbance and displacement when visitors or staff are on the site for recreational use and for construction. Visual and noise disturbances could disrupt normal wildlife behavior, however sufficient dispersal habitat exists surrounding the site to accommodate mobile wildlife for minimal affects. Although it is against refuge regulations, occasionally people may attempt to feed wildlife or leave food behind which habituates wildlife and attracts them to the site when people are present. Animals such as ducks, geese, swans, chipmunks and/or others may be susceptible to this type of human exposure and disturbance. Reports and observations of this have been limited in the past and therefore likely to result in only minor short-term effects. If incidents of feeding of wildlife become common, mitigation measures can include information and regulatory signage at the adjacent site kiosk and staff or law enforcement contacts with visitors while at the site.

Short term impacts also include disturbance and displacement as well as possible direct mortality of small insects (i.e. ants, mosquitos, wasp nests, moth cocoons) or potentially baby deer mice during maintenance projects to replace or repair deteriorated materials such as roofing, timbers or stone grouting, although this is likely to have minor impacts to species populations in the area.

A pair of Eastern phoebes have been observed nesting on the northern conical portion of the shelter. Empty nests will be removed prior to construction or construction will be delayed in the event incubating nesting birds are found within the shelter to ensure compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 703-712; 50 CFR Parts 10, 12, 20, and 21. The nesting season for eastern phoebe in this region is typically May – June. Eastern phoebe populations within the United States have increased slightly between 1966 and 2019 according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey and they are considered a species of low conservation concern. No adverse direct or cumulative impacts are expected for this species.

Bats have not been observed roosting in the structure. An emergence survey for bats was done on the evening of June 9, 2022 as a result of intra-service section 7 coordination and no bats were observed using the structure for roosting. There is also no bat feces or records of bats using the structure for roosting. If bats are detected in the future to be roosting in the structure, work would be stopped, and additional endangered species consultation would occur.

There are no impacts to aquatic species as the shelter is located on an upland site.

Alternative B

The impacts to this alternative are like those for Alternative A, except short term impacts to wildlife may occur over a slightly longer duration during the initial remodeling construction. Construction and demolition activities may take one or more months to complete, but likely less than six months. Similar to Alternative A, demolition periods will be delayed as needed to mitigate for nesting birds or roosting bats if found present at the site.

Alternative C

The impacts to this alternative are similar to those for Alternative B.

Threatened and Endangered Species, and Other Special Status Species

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Several threatened, endangered or species of concern occur within the refuge for which the proposed action complies with the following laws:

- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 668-668c, 50 CFR 22
- Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA), as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1531-1544; 36 CFR Part 13; 50 CFR Parts 10, 17, 23, 81, 217, 222, 225, 402, and 450
- Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, 16 U.S.C. 742 a-m
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 703-712; 50 CFR Parts 10, 12, 20, and 21
- Executive Order 13186 – Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds, 66 Fed. Reg. 3853 (2001).

Refuge staff uses the Information for Planning and Consultation tool (IPAC) to identify threatened and endangered species. An updated species list and section 7 consultation was completed in April 2024 as this list is frequently updated and additional species were added from time of publishing the draft and final EA. A Verification letter for the project named 'Structural Improvements to the Seney NWR Show Pool Shelter' for specified threatened and endangered species that may occur in your proposed project location consistent with the Michigan Endangered Species Determination Key (Michigan DKey) and Concurrence from the Ecological Services Michigan field office was obtained. Federally Threatened and Endangered species whose range overlaps with the proposed action area include Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), Rufa Red Knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*), and Pitcher's thistle (*Cirsium pitcher*). Additionally, Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is a Candidate for listing and tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) is proposed endangered. Only the gray wolf, monarch butterfly and northern long-eared bat are known based on refuge records to occur on the refuge and may be present at times near the project area.

Multiple packs of wolves use portions of the refuge throughout the year and breed within the refuge. The project site is likely within a wolf territory, which typically range in size in the upper peninsula of Michigan from 5 square miles to 221 square

miles (Michigan DNR, 2015 p. 8). There are no den locations or previous indications of possible pup rendezvous sites within the 1.4-acre project area. Wolves are typically reported from vehicle drivers to be sighted crossing the M-77 highway. In 2019 the carcass of a young adult female (1.2 years old) hit by a car was collected on the refuge roadside of M-77 about a half mile north of Refuge Entrance Road near the South Show Pool.

Northern long eared bats are not known to use the structure and bats were not observed during an emergence survey conducted in June of 2022. Although unlikely, it is possible bats may be found in the future to roost in the roof of the structure or underneath the cedar shake shingles during the active season (April 1 through October 31st). The project area has no known hibernacula or maternity roost sites for northern long-eared bats.

The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is a Species of Special Concern and a candidate species for Endangered Species Act listing. Monarchs and other pollinators are declining in population which may be a result of habitat loss and degradation. Milkweed and other pollinator plant species do exist within the vicinity of the shelter, in the transitional areas from upland to wetland, within the wetland areas adjacent to the structure and in the ditch along the highway.

Bald Eagles occur on the refuge and may be present in the project area, although are not known to nest within site of the immediate vicinity. Bald Eagles are protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act as well as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The following bird Species of Special Concern whose range overlaps with the Proposed Action and could occur in surrounding wetlands or scrub/shrub habitat are osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), trumpeter swan (*Cygnus buccinator*), LeConte's sparrow (*Ammodramus leconteii*), lesser yellowlegs (*Tringa flavipes*), Pectoral Sandpiper (*Calidris melantotos*) common tern (*Sterna hirundo hirundo*), Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*), black-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*), bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), Canada Warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*), Golden-winged Warbler (*Vermivora chrysoptera*), Veery (*Catharus Fuscescens*) and wood thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*). The latter five are not likely to be present as the habitat is not ideal for these species and black-billed cuckoo are uncommon on the refuge. One or two trumpeter swan pairs have traditionally nested on the Show Pools however this has not occurred in the past several years due to low water levels in the North and South Show Pools.

Other Species of Special concern whose range overlaps with the refuge but are not known or likely to occur on the project area include wood turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*), chorus frog (*Pseudacris illinoensis*), and Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*).

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

American bald eagle populations have rebounded nationally and climbed to an estimated 316,700 individual bald eagles in the lower 48 states. (USFWS, 2020)

Gray wolf populations have also increased in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan since 1989 with 695 wolves counted in the winter of 2020. The 2015 Michigan Wolf Management Plan estimates of biological carrying capacity for the Upper Peninsula are imprecise but range from 600 to 1350 wolves (MDNR, 2015).

Northern long-eared bat populations have plummeted in recent years, with range wide summer occupancy declines by 80% from 2010–2019 (USFWS, 2022). The bat, currently listed as threatened, faces extinction due to the range-wide impacts of white-nose syndrome, a deadly disease affecting cave-dwelling bats across the continent.

Monarch butterfly populations are trending downward so sharply that their migration is threatened. Based on annual counts at overwintering sites, from 1996 to 2020, the eastern monarch population dropped 88 percent, from an estimated 383 million to just under 45 million. Loss of habitat in overwintering areas and throughout breeding and migration areas is a primary cause. (USFWS, 2020)

The changes proposed for the Show Pool Shelter would not increase or alter the footprint of the structure and only result in minor increases to visitation at the site over the long-term. We do not anticipate long-term changes to the site that would affect threatened and endangered species.

The Great American Outdoor Act deferred maintenance project impacts to threatened and endangered species were evaluated in an informal consultation with the Service's Ecological Services program and determined to not effect Canada lynx, piping plover, red knot, dwarf lake iris, Houghton's goldenrod, and Pitcher's thistle. Gray wolves are not likely to be adversely affected and incidental take of northern long-eared bats was within the Service's January 5, 2016 biological opinion for northern long-eared bat and 4(d) Rule that was in affect at the time.

The Service is not aware of any other specific planned actions adjacent to the project area from private, state, or local governments that could affect listed species using this site.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

Impacts of refuge management and visitor use have been evaluated previously in the Environmental Assessment for the refuge's 2009 Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Impacts were determined to not have an adverse impact on threatened or endangered species listed at the time. Species not included in the initial analysis include northern long eared bats, tricolored bats and monarch butterflies. An effects determination for endangered and threatened species consultation was completed in April 2024 using the Michigan Determination Key within the Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system and is incorporated into this environmental assessment as reference. Ecological Services confirmed their concurrence with the determinations. Determinations from that consult are summarized as follows for the following threatened and endangered species: gray wolves, Canada lynx, Northern long-eared bat, tricolored bat, monarch butterflies, Pitcher's thistle and Rufa red knot.

Although gray wolves may use the upland site and dams surrounding the Show Pool Shelter while traveling, they can easily avoid or freely move away from any disturbances caused from construction and/or visitors with ample habitat existing outside of the project area. The upland site surrounding the Show Pool Shelter is only 1.4 acres and not likely for wolves to occupy for long periods of time given the proximity to the road and limited prey availability. Since visitor numbers are not expected to change for the Show Pool Access Area, current levels of noise, traffic and wildlife disturbance should remain consistent with past years. Any wolves active on the landscape would be able to avoid project activities without incurring adverse impacts and therefore the determination for this project is not likely to adversely affect. Canada lynx are not known to occur on the refuge. There is ample surrounding habitat that any lynx could avoid or freely move away from should they occur. Any potential effects would be insignificant and not likely to adversely affect. Indications of bats using the structure to roost have not been observed and therefore the determination for Northern long-eared bat and tricolored bat is no effect. Monarch butterflies are not likely to utilize the structure or the immediate surrounding lawn and gravel parking area. A no effect determination is made. Pitcher's thistle and Rufa red knot are not known to occur on the refuge and the

project area is not suitable for these species. A no effect determination is made for the proposed action.

Other species with special status included in this analysis are bald eagles, osprey, trumpeter swans, wood turtles, chorus frogs and Blanding's turtles and affects for these species is described as follows. Bald eagles and osprey are not known to nest on or near the proposed project site. Bald eagles and osprey may occasionally use trees on the site for perching and may forage in the area. An osprey nesting platform was installed in 2018 near the shelter, however it has never been used and the pools have not had adequate water levels to support fish species for foraging. Disturbance to osprey or bald eagles foraging or perching at the site would be temporary and negligible as suitable and higher quality habitat exists immediately outside the project area. Trumpeter swans have been tolerant to people accessing this area in the past when suitable nesting habitat existed near the project area and are likely to continue to tolerate such disturbance. However, they could become habituated to people feeding them. Reports and observations of this have been limited in the past and therefore likely to result in only a negligible affect to individual swans in the short term. The Show Pools freeze in the winter and the habitat surrounding the project area is not suitable for swans to be present during the winter. Feeding wildlife is against refuge regulations. The refuge monitors trumpeter swan presence at this site as part of its regular wildlife monitoring survey activities. The site is also inspected weekly during the summer for visitor use issues. Should feeding become an issue, mitigation measures can easily be implemented at the site to increase public awareness regarding the regulation and risks to feeding swans and other wildlife in general on the refuge and at this location. Impacts to wood turtles, chorus frogs or Blanding's turtle are unlikely. These species are unlikely to occur within the shelter or the surrounding upland site where visitor and maintenance activities would occur.

Alternative B and C

The impacts to this alternative are the same as those for Alternative A.

Visitor Use and Experience

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The Show Pool Shelter was completed in 1938 by the WPA/CCC and has helped welcome visitors throughout most of the refuge's history. In 1994 the shelters were closed because picnicking was considered a low priority public use. The structures

were deteriorating due to woodpecker damage and vandalism. Picknickers were stripping the shingles off the structure and using them to start the grills. Many visitors would leave their waste behind or toss it into the outhouse septic tanks causing maintenance issues as well as detracting from the site's aesthetics and wildlife value. This was an unpopular decision, and the area was reopened in 2008 with the support of the Seney Natural History Association which is the refuge's Friends group. An agreement was signed by the Friends to clean the restrooms and pick up litter. By 2015 staff members had taken over this duty along with help from recreational volunteers, front desk volunteers, and the custodian that services the office and visitor center.

For the past 11 years the shelters have received an average of 7,706 visitors per year with 2021 being the highest visitation at 10,546 and 2011 being the lowest visitation at 5,803 visitors. The site is popular with single people, couples, and small family groups as well as larger groups including classes, family reunions, and groups of friends congregating.

Visitors use the site as a place to picnic, an access point to the refuge's South Show Pool, Show Pool Connector and Pine Ridge Nature Trails, fishing when there is water in the pools, wildlife observation and photography, and a place to escape sudden rainstorms and extreme heat. Some visitors also camp, although this is not an approved activity for the site.

The Show Pool Shelter is a pack in and pack out site. Trash cans or waste disposal are not offered. The refuge does not have the capacity to dispose of large amounts of waste generated by the public. A small percentage of the site's users do not follow the pack in and pack out policy. Litter can be an issue on the site. Staff and volunteers complete regular site visits to tidy the space. Some people also dispose of their trash in the outhouse by throwing it into the toilet. This causes issues because it can clog the sewage waste collection truck's hoses making it challenging to find companies willing to work with the refuge.

See Appendices A and B for photos and current maps of the area.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Impacts from visitor use and increased environmental education on the refuge regarding the Great American Outdoors Act deferred maintenance projects located outside of the project area are not further analyzed here. These projects were considered within the framework of the Seney Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment decision Finding of No Significant Impact and/or

within agency categorical exclusions involving routine maintenance and repair (43 CFR 46.210 and 516 DM 8.5B2). Impacts are not further evaluated here.

Given the Great American Outdoors Act deferred maintenance projects are occurring now and over the next few years, it is possible this site may get more use in the short term (through 2025) when other facilities are closed during construction. However, the site is self-limiting to the number of visitors due to the parking area size and the limited amenities will likely make it less appealing for some visitors. Additionally, the refuge will offer an alternate temporary visitor center during construction.

In general, Seney National Wildlife Refuge receives on average 87,735 visitors a year. These visits can be broken down into popular activities such as auto tour visits, whitefish point unit visits, visitor center, photography, hiking/cross country skiing and consumptive recreation such as hunting and fishing. As described above the visits to Show Pool shelter account for a little less than nine percent of the total annual refuge visits.

The Visitor Services Plan calls for the Show Pool Shelter to be used to support environmental education opportunities for hosting public schools that participate in environmental education on the refuge. The primary location for larger groups (over 20 students) is at the headquarters and visitor center site where multiple bathrooms, running water and recreational facilities are available without having to have the students bussed further. The refuge does occasionally get use from smaller homeschools, charter schools or college groups that use the refuge to lead their own field trips and programs. These type of environmental education programs currently contribute a minimal portion of Show Pool public access area site visits.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

There would be a closure of the structure while the repairs are made which would have temporary minor negative impacts to visitor access to the site, estimated to be one to three months. Once initial repairs are complete then long-term maintenance closures would range from a couple hours for minor repairs and up to several weeks for more extensive projects. Mitigation measures for extensive project closures can easily be implemented to notify visitors using press releases, social media, and signage of the closures. Visitors can be redirected to other refuge recreational opportunities in other areas of the refuge.

Wildlife observation opportunities would remain minimal. Currently, the conical portions of the shelter are largely enclosed except for a gap that serves as a door on both the north and south sides of the structure. The door gaps do not face the beautiful vistas available at the site, instead you can look across the lawn at a picnic table and grill, look at the stone fireplace, or look at the current outhouse and signage. The views of the pools where wildlife is most often seen are completely obscured by the shelter.

The opportunity and quality of experience for recreational use inside the structure for resting, eating and seeking shelter from rain and direct sunlight would remain the same and not be ideal for some users. The cones are effective for blocking wind, rain and offering a cool retreat on hot sunny summer days. The structure allows for two picnic tables in one cone and one accessible picnic table in the other cone. The slanted roofline limits access to the benches on the outer walls making it difficult for adults of average height to use and people must be able to duck their heads. Taller people are limited to the benches in the center.

The architecture of the shelter will not change and may not be welcoming and could cause offense to some Native American visitors and/or people sensitive about the use of this architecture and the history of how it came to exist. These users may avoid the site or refuge entirely. This would have a long-term negative intermediate impact for improving visitors' experience of recreational uses on refuges and public participation at Seney National Wildlife Refuge. With Tribal support and input, mitigation measures could be implemented to develop interpretive panels that discuss Tribal history and the cultural sensitivities the structure may evoke for some users. If use of a Tribal symbol is appropriately acknowledged at the site and Tribal users are aware their government was counseled and supportive of this structure, they may be more willing to visit the site and long-term negative impacts could be less than estimated.

Visitors who have sentimental or nostalgic connections to the current appearance of the structure will be able to continue to enjoy and share with others who accompany them to the site. The site will be a place to remind visitors of the early development of the refuge by the CCC/WPA. Visitors particularly interested in the CCC/WPA history will continue to be able to visit the site and see the examples of the original craftsmanship.

Environmental education participation would likely remain at the level it currently receives.

Proper maintenance of the structure will support current and future visitation at the structure and Show Pool Access Area in general resulting in a negligible increase in visitation. This project will have a minor additive effect on the Great American Outdoors Act deferred maintenance projects occurring adjacent to the project area resulting in minor increases to visitation at the refuge over the long-term.

Proper maintenance and repair to the Show Pool Shelter as it currently appears may help appeal to people's good nature and desire to do well and promote proper use and care of the structure. This may discourage some instances of vandalism such as carving into wood or graffiti resulting in minor improvements to reducing incidents of vandalism. Although there may be a minor improvement to some vandalism occurrences of unauthorized camping, littering and occasionally using the shelter as a toilet that will likely continue and pose challenges for law enforcement and staff. For camping incidents (typically fewer than 6 per year) and sewage incidents (2 in last 8 years), the enclosed design hides occupants from view and from time-to-time people take advantage for these types of activities. Mitigation measures include utilizing onsite signage, personal contacts and regular site inspections by law enforcement and refuge staff may reduce the occurrences of these incidents but under current staffing levels are not likely to be implemented and impacts will likely remain the same.

Alternative B

This alternative would call for more significant alterations to the structure and therefore may take longer to complete than alternative B. This may lead to access to the site for visitors being closed for a longer period during initial repairs than Alternative A. The closures are still likely to be short term (1-6 months) and have a minor effect on visitor use. Closures for long-term routine maintenance would be like Alternative A.

The altered design would increase wildlife viewing and observation opportunities by providing more open space under a pavilion roof on each side of the stone fireplace and removing the walls. Opening the shelter by removing walls facing the wetland pools would improve the views and opportunity to observe wildlife on the refuge while using the shelter. It would also make the structure more user friendly and accessible to families and other user groups by enabling people to sit under the shelter and observe other members of their group who may be fishing, hiking, taking photos or participating in other approved recreational opportunities. This

would result in a positive long term intermediate affect for wildlife observation recreation.

The opportunity and quality of experience for recreational use inside the structure for resting, eating and seeking shelter from rain and direct sunlight would result in changes that would improve these experiences for more users. The changes will offer greater accessibility and mobility for visitors inside the shelter. By removing walls and retaining the current site footprint, visitors could more freely maneuver around the seating and tables making them more comfortable and accessible for people of various degrees of mobility and height would no longer be considered as a limitation for use of amenities. This would offer intermediate positive long-term effects on recreational experience for the site.

Changing the architecture of the shelter so that it no longer has a strong resemblance to teepees may have a positive impact on recreational experiences for visitors who may have otherwise been offended by the current or original design of the shelter. The proposed design alterations would offer a more welcoming and inviting experience to all visitors, particularly those who identify as Native Americans. This would have a long term positive intermediate impact for improving visitors' experience of recreational uses on refuges and public participation at Seney National Wildlife Refuge.

Visitors who have sentimental or nostalgic connections to the current appearance of the structure may feel a sense of loss to the proposed architectural changes. Some visitors who have personal connections to the shelter and/or family traditions may be disappointed to see the shelter changed. Several individuals may feel priority should be given to preserving the greatest extent of history possible above all other purposes and needs for this project. Visitors particularly interested in the CCC/WPA history may be disappointed to see the loss of original craftsmanship work that would result from the proposed architectural changes. These sentiments were shared with staff during the public comment period. To mitigate and lessen the burden of loss, this alternative will preserve the sense of place of the structure by maintaining many of the original characteristics including the shelter location, stone fireplace and log timber construction. Continuing to offer a shelter with picnic tables and access to the site will ensure traditions can continue at the same location once improvements are finished. The site will continue to be a place to remind visitors of our cultural history and the early development of the refuge by the CCC/WPA. Interpretive panels at the site can help share this rich history. The recreational opportunities the site currently offers

will continue to be offered but with improvements that overall result in a more positive experience for visitors recreating at the site.

Recordation of the layout, materials and photos of the existing structure will be completed prior to altering the structure to preserve historical information about the shelter. Some people may feel loss of an iconic refuge structure. From a distance, the shelter will appear less unique and perhaps less memorable to visitors passing by on the highway and therefore may draw in fewer incidental visitors. Although it may appear less unique from a distance, it will be visually appealing by retaining much of the natural and rustic features from the original skilled WPA laborers. To highlight its custom construction, interpretation of the site could draw visitor's attention to the skilled craftsmanship of the stone fireplace and log timbers as well directing them to other historical structures within walking distance of the site such as the South Show Pool rock spillway or the refuge visitor center. With implementation of the mitigation measures, the recreational experience for these users is considered to have an intermediate negative affect over the long-term.

Environmental education use may increase slightly at the site resulting in minor impacts to environmental education opportunities. The functionality of the redesigned structure may be more inviting and beneficial for small independently led groups such as scout leaders working with a troop on cooking, photography or other badges compatible with refuge visitor uses and wildlife management.

Compared to Alternative A, overall visitation and use of the Show Pool Shelter structure itself is expected to increase substantially in the long-term with the shelter changes aimed at improving wildlife observation, recreational experiences, and protecting some of the historical features. However, the overall visitation to the Show Pool Access Area site in general is only expected to have a minor increase overall given the limited amenities and parking capacity. Like Alternative A, this project will have an additive affect to the Great American Outdoors Act deferred maintenance projects occurring adjacent to the project area resulting in minor increases to refuge visitation.

Proper maintenance and repair will have similar affects to alternative A to reducing incidents of vandalism. Additionally, creating a more open shelter will reduce the ability for people to hide behind walls which may help reduce unauthorized camping or defecating inside when the site is closed. Like Alternative A, mitigation measures will include utilizing onsite signage, personal contacts and regular site inspections by law enforcement and refuge staff. This will result in an overall increase to visitor experience in the long-term.

Alternative C

The initial project construction and long-term maintenance and repairs would have similar duration and closure impacts to visitors as Alternative B.

Like Alternative B, this option would increase opportunities for wildlife observation and result in a positive long-term intermediate effect. Installation of windows facing the pools would increase wildlife observation opportunities within the structure. The shelter may function like an observation or photo blind where the walls may help conceal people and cause less disturbance to wildlife. This could lead to visitors seeing more wildlife activity.

The opportunity for recreational use inside the structure for resting, eating and seeking shelter from rain and direct sunlight would continue. Designating one side of the shelter to wildlife observation and installing benches while limiting the other side to one picnic table will improve accessibility and offer a more comfortable experience with space for maneuvering inside the shelter. This would offer intermediate positive long-term effects on recreational experience for the site.

Changing the architecture of the shelter so that it no longer has a strong resemblance to teepees would have similar impacts as alternative B on recreational experiences for visitors who may otherwise had been offended by the current or original design of the shelter. However, there may be some people who would remain offended by any remaining conical portions of the original design. It is unclear the extent of potential refuge visitors this would include and therefore the degree of impact is unknown and assumed to be minor over the long term.

Impacts to architectural changes on visitors who have sentimental, nostalgic or historical appreciation would be like alternative B, but to a lesser extent. Retaining a greater amount of the current architecture in the future design will enable visitors to see the resemblance to the structure as it appears today. With implementation of the mitigation measures described in alternative B, the recreational experience for these users is considered to have a minor negative affect over the long term.

Impacts to environmental education at the site would be like Alternative A while, impact to overall visitation and use is like Alternative B.

Proper maintenance and repair will have similar affects to alternative A to reducing incidents of vandalism. Since the windows would only be on the pool side, the walls facing the highway would still conceal people from high visibility of the site entrance road.

Cultural Resources

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The proposed action involves a historic structure (the Show Pool Shelter) and cultural symbols (teepee architecture). Since no Tribal artifacts or remains are within the site, the following laws do not apply.

- American Indian Religious Freedom Act, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 1996 – 1996a; 43 CFR Part 7
- Antiquities Act of 1906, 16 U.S.C. 431-433; 43 CFR Part 3
- Paleontological Resources Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 470aaa – 470aaa-11
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013; 43 CFR Part 10
- Executive Order 11593 – Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 36 Fed. Reg. 8921 (1971)
- Executive Order 13007 – Indian Sacred Sites, 61 Fed. Reg. 26771 (1996).]

The historic context of the shelter stems from U.S. history during the Great Depression era, 1929-1939. Hoping to lift the country out of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt authorized the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act in 1935. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were some of the New Deal programs intended to relieve the chronic and widespread unemployment within the nation. Workers from the program built highways, schools, hospitals, airports, roadside parks, and other structures. The men at the WPA and CCC camps were utilized by the Bureau of Biological Survey (the precursor to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) to build and expand wildlife refuges around the nation, including at Seney. Structures were designed not just for administrative or housing purposes but also for encouraging the public's enjoyment of the resources. The Show Pool Shelter is an example of that effort. Similarly, Native Americans worked on their lands as part of the CCC – Indian Division run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The closest Indian CCC camp counterpart was in Marquette and a WPA project at Bay Mills (Cleland, C. 2004).

Also in 1935, congress passed the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. This law recognized the importance of American Indian art and put in place several mechanisms for its protection and promotion (Thompson, 2022). American Indians were employed on

work-relief projects to create pottery, rugs, blankets, and other goods and handicrafts and Indian artists were hired or commissioned by New Deal agencies to create art for public places across the country. (See, e.g., a Department of the Interior video showing American Indians on a WPA arts and crafts project: “The WPA on Indian Reservations”).

While there was this federal effort to recognize the importance of Native American art and culture, there are no records or notes regarding what motivated the designer to use Tribal iconography on the construction of the wildlife observation/picnic shelter on the project site. Additionally, what limited records are available in the refuge’s files do not indicate Tribal members or Tribal CCC camps were involved or consulted on its development. Whatever the motivation, the appearance is not symbolic of an authentic woodland wigwam used by indigenous people of the area as the original name implies, but rather the conical components resemble teepees, which were the homes of the nomadic Tribes of the Great Plains who did not occupy this region.

When the Show Pool Shelter was built, the country was becoming enamored with Native American culture through Hollywood movies depicting Great Plains and Southwestern peoples and frequently utilized Native American symbols without context or consultation with Tribes. Also starting in the late 1920s, as automobiles became more affordable, travelers began venturing out to rural areas on road trips. As such, they became in need of places to rest, consume food and use restrooms. The need and funding for roadside improvements grew. The aim for roadside parks was to create a context of place within the highway system and offer relief from travel. Their design from this era typically utilized natural materials and skilled labor to appear handmade rather than manufactured. This required a great deal of skilled labor that is not typical of today’s roadside parks. “Creative developers designed shelters in forms that drew on regional imagery such as teepees, oil rigs and windmills and designed buildings that reflected the architectural heritage of indigenous people” (Rest Area History, 2022).

In the recently completed Historic Context and National Register of Historic Places Eligibility Evaluation for the Seney National Wildlife Refuge (July 2021), the Seney National Wildlife Refuge is significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government for its associations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the New Deal, the CCC, and the WPA. It is also significant in the area of Conservation for its associations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (then the Bureau of Biological Survey) large-scale habitat

restoration efforts to convert land that had been cutover, burned, and drained for agriculture to land that provided wildlife habitat, starting in the 1930s, and in the area of Recreation for its associations with tourism, birding, hunting, and fishing in the central Upper Peninsula. The refuge represents changes in public land management in the 1930s, which were partially guided by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's emphasis on natural resource conservation.

The shelter is recommended as a contributing resource to the proposed Seney National Wildlife Refuge Historic District. Although the Show Pool Shelter has lost integrity of design and materials due to the replacement of wood shakes, new door opening, and loss of the window openings, the shelter retains the integrity of location, setting and workmanship, feeling and association. The surrounding landscape also retains much of its historic integrity and the trees were planted by the WPA and refuge staff. The shelter is a unique feature at the refuge and continues to reflect its associations with the WPA and CCC, the early development of the refuge, and the public's use of the refuge. Actions taken on this structure must be evaluated to comply with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 470-470x-6; 36 CFR Parts 60, 63, 78, 79, 800, 801, and 810 and in accordance with Executive Order 11593 – Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, 36 Fed. Reg. 8921 (1971).

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

To comply with the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, 16 U.S.C. 470aa – 470mm; 18 CFR Part 1312; 32 CFR Part 229; 36 CFR Part 296; 43 CFR Part 7, an archeological survey was completed on June 15, 2021, for site improvements that include minor parking and road realignments and installing a new vault toilet facility. No artifacts were found, and the results indicated much of the area has been previously disturbed, likely from original construction.

Coordination and consultation with the State Historical Preservation Office for the associated site improvements including the installation of a new outhouse and alterations of the parking and road occurred in 2021. A determination of no adverse effect to cultural resources was made for the Show Pool Access Area improvements on July 22, 2021. Consultation specific to the Show Pool Shelter was completed as part of the environmental assessment public review process and is summarized in the State Coordination Section of this document.

In April of 2021 formal letters were sent via email to all Tribal historic preservation officers and wildlife biologists within the ceded territory to seek suggestions for

how to address the shelter and how they might like to be involved. Additional follow up emails and phone calls were made to Bay Mills Indian Community and Sault Tribes. No official recommendations have been made, however personal communications indicate the structures do not resemble wigwams and therefore they do not feel comfortable making recommendations other than not to call them wigwams. On June 28, 2021, the refuge manager sent a meeting request to all Tribes in the ceded territories to check in on concerns and priorities with regards to lands the refuge administers and to discuss Seney National Wildlife Refuge infrastructure projects planned, including the Great American Outdoor Act deferred maintenance projects. Invitations were sent to the historic and natural resource staff and two Tribes responded. Informal meetings were held with the Bay Mills Tribe and Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, respectively on July 20 and 21, 2021, where the restroom and alteration of the parking and road were briefly reviewed to gather any initial concerns the Tribes may have. A written summary of refuge initiatives and a draft summary of visitor center interpretive themes and key messages were provided to participants. The Tribal members did not express concerns for the other infrastructure projects (which did not include the shelter project) and Bay Mills Indian Community confirmed in an email the location of all refuge infrastructure projects including this project site did not involve any known Tribal sacred sites. The refuge hopes to continue to learn more about Tribal priorities and history relevant to refuge lands and incorporate where appropriate into future interpretive opportunities with help from Tribal members. Additional communication occurred with the Tribes in 2022 as part of the public review process for the draft Environmental Assessment and is summarized under the Tribal Outreach section of this document.

For decades Native American communities all over the United States have been asking federal and state governments, businesses, and private citizens to evaluate their actions and take a deeper look into how they utilize Native American symbols and represent their culture.

Unique roadside rest areas or parks are disappearing across the country in general due to limited budgets from government agencies, automobiles are more comfortable and easier to drive, and commercial amenities are more widely available now (Byrnes, 2013).

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

This alternative would preserve the greatest extent of original historical attributes of the Show Pool Shelter by protecting and “like-for-like” repairing what remains of the original wood timber and stone craftsmanship design. The site will continue to be a place where people can see original craftsmanship of the CCC/WPA that reflects the cultural history, traditional skilled craftsmanship and early development of the refuge. This will protect the integrity of location, setting and workmanship, feeling and association which make the Show Pool Shelter a contributing asset to the refuge’s eligibility as a historic district within the state. This would be a major positive long-term impact on the shelter as a cultural resource. The Service would be proposing to the consulting parties to issue a “No Effect” determination regarding compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act if this alternative is chosen.

While not changing the current appearance of the shelter, this alternative would present an opportunity to strengthen the government-to-government relationship with Tribal Nations should they agree to be involved. Looking to the future we hope to promote positive interactions with Native Americans and to move forward with cultural appreciation. This is accomplished when the Tribes are consulted regarding design and messaging pertaining to their communities. Involvement could include (but is not limited to) offering input for content development of interpretive panels that reflect the natural and Tribal history of the region, the cultural sensitivities the structure may evoke for some users, as well as the CCC and WPA historical contributions in developing the refuge. This would result in a positive impact to the government-to-government relationship and Tribal refuge visitors. Without Tribal support, at best this alternative may not add value to strengthen government-to-government relationships.

Alternative B

This alternative would protect the Show Pool Shelter’s historic integrity of location, setting, and association, but result in loss of some workmanship and feeling qualities of the shelter. These terms are defined in the *Guidelines for Completing National Register of Historic Places Forms* (National Register Bulletin 15; Page 44).

The architectural changes would result in the loss of some features of the original design and craftsmanship built by the CCC/WPA. Some of the sense of historical feeling the current design conveys would also be lost. The conical portions taken

together with the stone fireplace and log timbers convey the shelter's historic character and sense of feeling. Removal of the walls which are distinguishing features may reduce the feeling that the shelter inspires as a reflection of the refuge's early development and time in history. However, this alternative will preserve the sense of place of the structure by maintaining many of the original skilled craftsmanship characteristics including the shelter location, stone fireplace and log timber roof construction.

The shelter would continue to serve its original purpose and use and be a place to remind visitors of the early development of the refuge by the CCC/WPA. Interpretive panels at the site can help share this rich history. To highlight its custom construction, interpretation of the site could draw visitor's attention to the skilled craftsmanship of the stone fireplace and log timbers as well directing them to other historical structures within walking distance of the site such as the South Show Pool rock spillway.

The Service would be proposing to the consulting parties to issue an "Adverse Effect" determination regarding compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act if this alternative is chosen. Recordation of the layout, materials and photos of the existing structure would be completed prior to altering the structure to preserve historical information. Any adverse effects would be resolved in an agreement with the State Historical Preservation Office.

Conversely, changing the look of the structure may help to have more positive interactions with Tribal partners in the future by removing the portions of the structures that were designed to represent teepees but called wigwams. This alternative would present an opportunity to strengthen the government-to-government relationship with Tribal Nations and at worst would have no effect on current relationships since the structure would no longer have a strong resemblance to teepees.

Alternative C

The impacts to cultural resources of this alternative would be like Alternative B rather than Alternative A, but to a much lesser degree. Only the top cones would be removed. Retaining more of the original Tribally inspired architecture by retaining the lower walls and reopening the windows would result in much less loss of workmanship and feeling than Alternative B. The structure would still retain its integrity of location, setting and workmanship, feeling and association with the CCC/WPA. Although previous evaluations of the historic eligibility of the structure

as part of a “Historic District” evaluation had not identified the design of the shelter as a determining aspect for its eligibility, the Service recognizes alterations would result in physical destruction of part of the Shelter. The Service would be proposing to the consulting parties to issue an “Adverse Effect” determination in regard to compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act if this alternative is chosen. Any adverse effects would be resolved in an agreement with the State Historical Preservation Office.

This approach may present a risk of the resulting aesthetics of the structure remaining too strong of a resemblance to the initial conical design or even being truer to wigwam form. Although current local Tribal staff have not indicated a preference for an alternative, it is unclear if or how this alternative may impact a government-to-government relationship with future Tribal employees or Great Plains Tribes.

Refuge Management and Operations

Land Use on the Refuge

Natural resource management of the refuge takes a gradient approach to stewardship with natural resource conservation being the focus in Unit 1, natural resource conservation and restoration in Unit 2, natural resource restoration and preservation in Unit 3 and natural resource preservation in Unit 4 (see the map in Appendix C). The shelter is within Unit 1 of the refuge along the eastern boundary defined by state highway M-77. Unit 1 of the refuge is the most heavily disturbed landscape with development of the low hazard dam pool system, refuge facilities, and visitor activities including trails, an auto tour, and the visitor center. This leaves Units 2, 3 and 4 (more than 75% of the refuge) set aside for more emphasis on natural resource restoration and preservation along with fewer roads, dams, and more limited access to visitors. In Unit 4, over 25,000 acres of Seney are Wilderness where no roads or recreational structures are present.

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

The location of the shelter is on an upland site that has been established as a public access area since the refuge’s early development in 1938. A short gravel road off the well-traveled state highway M-77 leads to the shelter along with a single toilet outhouse, picnic tables and grills on the 1.4 acres site. Visitors can access trails around the two Show Pools or connect with other refuge trails.

Refuge management and operations at the site would consist of the same activities as in the past. This project would not change the amount of public infrastructure for this site and is addressing necessary maintenance and repairs to existing public infrastructure.

Water management of the North and South Show pools are typically controlled with stop log water control structures and emergency spillways. These structures are located on the South Show Pool and Show Pool Connector trails. North and South Show Pool are to be managed to provide habitat for swans, osprey, and other wildlife native to the region.

The Show Pool Shelter would continue to provide the same use as it has since 1938 for visitors.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

The Great American Outdoor Act deferred maintenance projects will be implemented concurrently with this project. Although the refuge will offer an alternate temporary visitor center during these projects, it is possible this site may get more use in the short term (through 2024) when other facilities are closed during construction. However, the site is self-limiting to the number of visitors due to the parking area size and the limited amenities will likely make it less appealing for some visitors. Visitors will likely seek out other access areas of the refuge.

There are four primary recreational access areas to the refuge for wildlife observation, with the Show Pools Shelter project site being one. The most heavily used is the main headquarters site. The entrance is one mile south of the Show Pool access area along the refuge's eastern boundary. Once current construction at the headquarters is completed, the headquarters site offers a visitor center, kiosks, after-hour restrooms with running water, Pine Ridge Nature Trail, pavilion with picnic tables and auto tour routes. Until construction is completed, a temporary visitor center will be located within an existing refuge facility on Manistique River Road, approximately 7 miles south of the Show Pool Access Area. Other site facilities at the headquarters area will also be unavailable until construction is complete, and operations can resume. All construction is anticipated to be finished by December 2025.

Robinson Road Access Area is located about 4 miles south of the Show Pool Access area and Driggs River Road Access Area is 12 miles north and west of the Show Pool Access Area on the north refuge boundary along state highway M-28. There are also seven pull-off areas with kiosks along the refuge's boundary. All of these sites

will not be impacted by other project work and will remain accessible to visitors for hiking, biking, and other wildlife observation opportunities.

Currently, the nearest roadside parks or rest areas offering restrooms and picnic tables are located south of the community of Germfask (approximately 4.25 miles) or north and west along state highway M-28 (approximately 8 miles). These facilities are anticipated to remain open to the public and would not cause an increase in traffic to the project area.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A through C

No new impacts to land use are expected. The shelter will remain and there will be no loss or gain in recreational facilities on the refuge. Refuge management and operations would be improved by the fact that the issues with the structural integrity of the shelters would be removed from the backlog of maintenance needs for the refuge. This would have a minor positive impact to the long-term management of the site by reducing maintenance.

Repairs to the North Show Pool as well as future water management of these pools would not be affected by this project and would continue. Visitor use may increase slightly resulting in minor increases to general maintenance and operation.

Increased visitor use of other sites is expected and would simply be redistributing land use to places where it already similarly occurs.

Administration

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Funding has been awarded for this project under a Presidential Initiative and with Congressional funding from the Great American Outdoor Act, Pub. L. 116-152, to address the deferred maintenance backlog on federal public lands. Seney National Wildlife Refuge received \$11.2 million to work on the four major initiatives listed below.

1. Visitor Center Replacement and Enhancement Project
2. Bridges/Water Control Structures Repair Project
3. Show Pool Access Area Rehabilitation Project
4. Pine Ridge Nature Trail Improvement Project

Approximately \$27,000 of this funding is for the Show Pool Shelter rehabilitation. This initiative is to be completed by September 2025.

Aside from GAOA funding, in 2021 the refuge received approximately \$794,806 for salaries and general operations. A total of \$60,500 was set aside to address annual maintenance of existing infrastructure and facilities, which is consistent with previous years funding.

Currently, the refuge has three vacancies in permanent staff including a refuge law enforcement officer, biologist, and assistant refuge manager. The minimum staffing plan for the refuge calls for 11 full time employees and two career seasonal permanent staff. During the field season, the refuge typically doubles its employees and interns with the help of the Seney Natural History Association and regionally sponsored youth employment programs. In addition to paid staff, the refuge has a robust volunteer program with over 40 regularly scheduled volunteers each week to help with projects including assisting the public in the visitor center, landscaping work, maintenance projects or restocking brochures at the public access sites where they also pick up trash and check the restrooms for supplies or cleaning needs.

Maintenance staff typically spend six to eight hours at the beginning of a season opening the Show Pool Shelter Access site. This involves opening the entrance gate, removing fallen branches or trees from the lawn areas, sweeping out the shelter, unlocking the restrooms and cleaning, filling holes in the gravel parking area and road, and repairing any damages found to tables or the structure. Closing the site requires less time and only involves cleaning up litter, locking the gate, and restroom.

Once the site is opened, staff and volunteers monitor the site for maintenance, cleaning, and restocking supplies on a weekly basis from May 15 through October 20. Two volunteers typically spend 30 minutes at the Show Pool Access Site each week collecting trash left behind at the site, sweeping out the pit toilet facility, sanitizing the seat, and replenishing toilet paper and hand sanitizer. Maintenance staff visit the site two to three times a week and spend 15 minutes to two hours depending on the activity. Typically, trash pickup can be done in 15 minutes, where mowing may take two hours.

Larger but less frequent reoccurring maintenance involves painting the wooden structure to preserve the log timbers. This is needed about every seven to 10 years and can be completed in a week by two to three workers at an estimated cost of

\$300 for materials. A roof can last 30 years before it may need to be replaced if it does not get damaged and are kept free from debris, moss or algae. Replacing the roof is estimated to take up to 21 days with a crew of three or four workers and may cost up to \$12,000 in materials. The vault toilet at the site is pumped out by a certified contractor every 3-4 years.

Occasionally, staff encounter sewage in the shelter or items in the pit toilet that the sewage disposal contractor can't remove from the vault with their hose. This happens once every two years. On these occasions, staff spend approximately three hours to done proper PPE and clean the mess.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

The Service is not aware of any planned actions of the state or local governments that could effect available time, funding, or staff needed to implement this project.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

No new impacts to refuge administration are expected. Initial one-time funding for the project will go toward staining the log timbers, replacing the cedar shakes, replacing any rotted materials and repairing the stone fireplace grout and missing stones. Increased use of the Show Pool Shelter would increase time spent at the site for cleaning trash left behind and restocking toilet supplies having a negligible impact on administration. However, the overall visitation to the Show Pool Access Area is only expected to have a minor increase overall given the limited amenities and parking capacity.

Future administration will be similar in time and cost of current administration described above. It may add 10 to 20 minutes more time to weekly inspections if more trash is left behind.

Alternative B

Minor impacts to refuge administration are expected in the short-term. Funding for the project may require additional design and construction costs as the structural changes would be more substantial and require safety review by engineering. The Service may also need to spend additional funding to contract work to meet mitigation requirements for an adverse effect determination on a historical structure. The Service's current budget and staffing for this project is expected to allow for these types of additional costs. Additional time and administration will be

necessary to complete this alternative as opposed to the time and administration required for Alternative A.

Long-term maintenance costs would be slightly less than Alternative A as the surface area for roof and stain would be less since there would be no walls to cover. This may also eliminate the occasional sewage disposal cleanup need.

Alternative C

The impacts to this alternative are like those for Alternative B. However, long term maintenance costs would be slightly higher and more like the long-term maintenance described in Alternative A.

Socioeconomics

Local and Regional Economies

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Seney National Wildlife Refuge is in northern Schoolcraft County, Michigan. One of 15 counties in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, it stretches from the shores of Lake Michigan north to within four miles of Lake Superior. Its poor soils and cold climate contribute to low populations and limit economic activities. Only 8,047 people live in the 1,171-square-mile Schoolcraft County (7.2 people per square mile). The population decreased slightly by 438 residents between 2010 and 2020. The two nearest towns, Germfask and Seney, host 463 and 101 people, respectively. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in the county from 2015-2019 was \$109,900. The closest towns with a population greater than 2,000 people are Manistique, Munising and Newberry, all of which are 40 miles away from the refuge.

In 2019, there were 216 employer establishments with 1,781 workers and 447 non-employer establishments. The civilian labor force is 47.4% with total accommodation and food services sales in 2012 at \$11,573. Total manufacturers' shipments were at \$104,366 and retail sales were \$124,635 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

The largest industries in Schoolcraft County, Michigan are Health Care and Social Assistance (466 people), Accommodation and Food Services (366 people), and Retail Trade (358 people). The highest paying industries are mining, quarrying, oil and gas extraction (\$61,071), transportation and warehousing (\$55,417) and transportation

and warehousing and utilities (\$52,500). The most common jobs held by residents of Schoolcraft County by number of employees are office and administration support occupations, food preparation and serving related occupations, and sales and related occupations (DataUSA, 2022).

Much of the area is forested and attracts summer visitors who enjoy hunting, hiking, camping and fishing supporting ecotourism industries. Riding trails with off road utility vehicles and snow machines is also a big attraction to the region surrounding the refuge. The refuge's outdoor recreational opportunities contribute to the regions ecotourism industry and helps to attract new visitors. Many refuge visitors plan to visit other popular regional destinations including Pictured Rocks National Lake Shore (815,308 visitors), Hiawatha National Forests, Tahquamenon State Park (500,000 visitors) and Whitefish Point Historical Shipwreck Museum and birding hot spot (175,000 visitors), all within 2 hours or less of the refuge. These well-known area attractions often draw people to discover the National Wildlife Refuge System at Seney.

Seney National Wildlife Refuge helps define the region's character and maintain its quality of life, and thus is important for the promotion of a diverse regional economy. Seney National Wildlife Refuge was one of the sample refuges investigated in a national study of the economic benefits to local communities of national wildlife refuge visitation (Laughland and Caudill, 2004). This study found that in 2004, resident and non-resident visitors to the refuge spent about \$547,300 in the refuge for expenditures on either non-consumptive recreation, hunting, or fishing. When this spending had cycled through the economy, the refuge had generated \$671,800 in final demand, \$235,000 in job income, 11 jobs, and \$112,600 in total tax revenue. The study concluded that Seney National Wildlife Refuge had a net economic value of \$538,700 for that year.

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

Adjacent site work occurring over the next few years associated with the Great American Outdoor Act Deferred Maintenance Projects fall within the framework of the Seney Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment decision Finding of No Significant Impact and/or within agency categorical exclusions involving routine maintenance and repair (43 CFR 46.210 and 516 DM 8.5B2). They are not further evaluated here.

The Service's 2019 Banking on Nature Report found national wildlife refuges are seen widely as travel-worthy destinations: 83 percent of refuge spending was done

by visitors from outside the local area, up 9 percent from earlier studies done in 2011. The national survey found trip-related spending generated \$3.2 billion of economic output in regional economies. An increase of 20 percent from 2011.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A

Initial funding for repairing the shelter will go toward purchasing materials to replace or repair deteriorated structural components which would have minor financial benefits to local businesses. Over the long term, a properly maintained shelter will need occasional supplies purchased locally and again provide a minor financial boost to local suppliers.

Proper maintenance of the structure will support current and future visitor use which will have negligible minor benefits to local ecotourism and service industry businesses with the majority of visitors coming from outside the local area (USFWS, 2019).

This project will have a minor additive affect to the Great American Outdoor Act deferred maintenance projects on the refuge that are occurring at the same time. Collectively, the initial project work will provide a minor boost to local economies for the short term and lead to a minor addition of increased spending in local economies by visitors in the long-term.

Alternative B

The impacts to this alternative are similar to those for Alternative A, but to a slightly or minor greater degree. Although material costs may be less initially and in the long term, architectural engineering design and mitigation for adverse effects on the historic structure would make initial project costs higher than Alternative A. Better opportunities for wildlife observation within the shelter may result in negligible increases to the site's visitation and overall economic benefit.

Alternative C

The impacts to this alternative are similar to those for Alternative A.

Environmental Justice

Affected Environment

Description of Affected Environment for the Affected Resource

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, requires all federal agencies to

incorporate environmental justice into their missions by identifying and addressing disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs and policies on minorities and low-income populations and communities.

The median income for a household in Schoolcraft County was \$45,500 (in 2019 dollars) from 2015-2019 with 16.7% of the population living below the poverty line (DataUSA, 2022). Schoolcraft County has a higher percent of families below the poverty level in comparison to the state average of 9.53% and the states median household income of \$57,144. The racial makeup of the county is 86.2 percent white alone, 9.3 percent Native American, and 3.8% two or more races. Other races contribute less than 1 percent. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020).

Description of Environmental Trends and Planned Actions

The Service is not aware of any adverse environmental trends or planned actions that would cause a disproportionally high adverse human health or environmental effect on minority and low-income populations.

Impacts on Affected Resource

Alternative A, B and C

No new impacts to environmental justice are expected for this alternative. The public access area to the refuge will remain available to minority and low-income visitors free of charge and is not contributing to disproportionally high adverse effects in the region.

Monitoring

As identified in the Inventory and Monitoring Plan, staff will continue to conduct reoccurring surveys for nesting loons, trumpeter swans, and osprey during the nesting season for the North and South Show Pools. During construction, project managers will ensure all work follows requirements of permits, mitigation measures and remains within the scope of the project impacts as described.

The site will be monitored while the structure is open to the public. Visitation is tracked using a pneumatic counter placed near the entrance gate which counts vehicles entering and leaving the site. The counter is calibrated using a formula which takes into account a vehicle driving over the tube twice and the number of people in each vehicle. This gives staff an estimate of the number of visitors using the access area. Staff members and volunteers will visit the site regularly to check the facilities for cleanliness, resupply, vandalism, litter, and maintenance needs.

Refuge law enforcement will continue to conduct periodic patrols that will include this site.

Summary of Analysis

Table 1: Summary of Impacts on the Terrestrial Wildlife and Aquatic Species.

Terrestrial Wildlife and Aquatic Species	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Disturbance	Short term minor impacts to wildlife from disturbance from maintenance construction or recreation activities. Sufficient dispersal habitat exists surrounding the site.	Similar as Alternative A except short-term impacts to wildlife may occur over a slightly longer duration (1-6 months) during the initial remodeling construction.	Same as Alternative B
Wildlife Habituation	Short term minor effects to wildlife becoming habituated to human feeding. Mitigation measures can include information and regulatory signage at the adjacent site kiosk and staff or law enforcement contacts with visitors while at the site.	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A
Less mobile wildlife	Negligible impacts to refuge populations caused from mortality of individual small insects (i.e. ants, mosquitos, wasp nests, moth cocoons) or potentially baby deer mice during maintenance projects. Project mitigations measures will be implemented to avoid take of active nesting birds	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A

Table 2: Summary of Impacts on the Threatened and Endangered Species.

Threatened and Endangered Species	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Disturbance	Disturbance from construction or visitors would be temporary and have negligible impacts as sufficient dispersal habitat exists surrounding the site for bald eagles, osprey, gray wolves, monarchs and trumpeter swans.	Similar to Alternative A except short term impacts to wildlife may occur over a slightly longer duration (1-6 months) during the initial remodeling construction.	Same as Alternative B

Table 3: Summary of Impacts on the Visitor Use and Experiences.

Visitor Use and Experience	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Site Access	Site closures for up to three months would have temporary negative impacts to visitor access. Mitigation measures can easily be implemented to notify visitors using press releases, social media, and signage of the closures. Visitors can be redirected to other refuge recreational opportunities.	Similar to Alternative A but site closures up to six months would have a slightly more negative short-term impact than Alternative A.	Same as Alternative B
Wildlife Observation	No change to current opportunities for Wildlife Observation.	Intermediate positive long-term benefit to wildlife observation experience from within the structure.	Same as Alternative B
Recreational Use	The opportunity and quality of experience for recreational use inside the structure for resting, eating and seeking shelter from rain and direct sunlight would remain the same and not be ideal for some users.	The opportunity and quality of experience for recreational use inside the structure for resting, eating and seeking shelter from rain and direct sunlight would result in changes that would improve these experiences for more users. The changes will offer greater accessibility and mobility for visitors inside the shelter. This would offer intermediate positive long-term effects on recreational use for the site.	Similar to Alternative B Designating one side of the shelter to wildlife observation and installing benches while limiting the other side to one picnic table will improve accessibility and offer a more comfortable experience with space for maneuvering inside the shelter. This would offer intermediate positive long-term effects on recreational use for the site.
Visitor Experience	No change to current visitor experience.	The intermediate positive long-term benefits of this alternative to visitors who may be offended by the current architecture would be countered by the intermediate negative impacts to visitors who value the historical integrity of the current structure. Mitigation for loss of historic integrity would include recordation and interpretive signage of historic significance	Similar to Alternative B, minor positive and negative impacts would cancel each other out.

Visitor Use and Experience	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Environmental Education	No change to current levels of use at the shelter for environmental education.	Environmental education use may increase slightly at the site resulting in minor impacts to environmental education opportunities.	Same as Alternative A
Visitation	Negligible increase in visitation at the Show Pool Access Area.	Similar to Alternative A but use of the shelter is expected to increase substantially over the long term (not necessarily the access area in general)	Same as Alternative B
Law Enforcement	Positive minimal impacts to reducing vandalism occurrences while unauthorized camping, littering and occasionally using the shelter as a toilet will continue. Mitigation measures will (continued on next page) include utilizing onsite signage, personal contacts and regular site inspections by law enforcement and refuge staff.	Similar to Alternative A, but with minor improvements over the long term to decreasing unauthorized activities.	Same as Alternative A
Cumulative	This project will have a minor additive effect on the Great American Outdoors Act deferred maintenance projects occurring adjacent to the project area resulting in minor increases to visitation at the refuge over the long term.	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A

Table 4: Summary of Impacts on the Cultural Resources.

Cultural Resources	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Historical value	Properly maintaining the structure would have a major positive long-term impact on the shelter as a historical cultural resource. A No Effect determination.	Altering the structure will cause an Adverse Effect and require mitigation measures. This alternative would protect the Show Pool Shelter's historic integrity of location, setting, and association, but result in loss of some workmanship and feeling qualities of the shelter.	The impacts to cultural resources of this alternative would be similar to alternative B, but to a lesser degree. A No Adverse Effect determination.

Cultural Resources	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Tribal	With Tribal involvement this opportunity would result in a positive impact to the government-to-government relationship and Tribal refuge visitors. On the contrary, without Tribal input or support, at best pursuing this alternative may not add value to strengthen government to government relationships.	This alternative may have a minor positive impact in the long term to fostering a positive government-to-government relationship with Tribes and to Tribal visitors. At worst, it would have no effect on current relationships since the structure would no longer have a strong resemblance to teepees.	This approach may present a risk of the resulting aesthetics of the structure remaining too strong of a resemblance to the initial conical design or even being truer to wigwam form. It is unclear if or how this alternative may impact a government-to-government relationship with Tribal nations.

Table 5: Summary of Impacts on Refuge Land Use.

Refuge Land Use	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Cumulative	Minor positive impact to reducing deferred maintenance backlog.	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A

Table 6: Summary of Impacts on Refuge Administration.

Refuge Administration	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Short-term	Minor positive impact to reducing deferred maintenance backlog.	Similar to Alternative A, but minor negative impacts are expected in the short term due to increased initial costs and compliance administration.	Same as Alternative B
Long-term	There would be negligible increases to cleaning maintenance of the site with minor increases to visitation over the long term.	Long term maintenance costs would be slightly less than Alternative A and have a minor positive impact on administration.	Long term maintenance costs would be slightly higher than Alternative B but lower than Alternative A having a negligible impact on refuge administration.

Table 7: Summary of Impacts on Local and Regional Economies

Local and Regional Economies	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Construction and Material Suppliers	Initial funding for repairing the shelter will go toward purchasing materials which would have minor financial benefits to local businesses. Over the long term, a properly maintained shelter will need occasional supplies purchased locally and again provide a minor financial boost to local suppliers.	The impacts to this alternative are similar to those for Alternative A, but to a slightly minor positive greater degree. Although material costs may be less initially and in the long term, architectural engineering design and mitigation for adverse effects on the historical structure would make initial project costs higher than Alternative A.	Same as Alternative B
Ecotourism & Service Industries	Negligible minor benefits to local ecotourism and service industry businesses from visitors coming from outside the local area to site.	Similar to Alt A but to a negligible greater degree as a result of better opportunities for wildlife observation within the shelter.	Same as Alternative B
Cumulative	Minor additive effect to concurring maintenance projects on the refuge where work will provide a minor boost to local economies for the short term and lead to a minor addition of increased spending in local economies by minor increases of visitors in the long term.	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A

Table 8: Summary of Impacts on Environmental Justice.

Environmental Justice	Alt A - Continue Current Management	Alt B - Remove Walls and Conical Roof	Alt C - Remove Conical Roof and Retain Conical Base
Cumulative	No change	Same as Alternative A	Same as Alternative A

Alternative A – Continue Current Management – [No Action Alternative]

In conclusion, the most beneficial impact of this alternative is that it would preserve what remains of the historical integrity of the shelter. It would also require less time and administration to implement work to repair deteriorating materials. However, this alternative would fail to meet all purpose and needs of the Service as described in this Environmental Assessment because the design does not promote wildlife observation, improve visitor use and experience and reduce unauthorized uses inside the enclosed conical portions of the shelter. Furthermore, No Tribal governments expressed an interest in working with the Service to appropriately interpret the structure's design from an indigenous people's perspective. Although removing the portions of the shelter that are representative of teepees was not a concern for local Tribal Nations, Service Native American Liaisons indicated it would be damaging to the Service's relationships with employees and Tribal Nations within the region and across the country where we work with Tribes whose cultures do include teepees. For some, the shelter may continue to reflect a history of disregard and lack of understanding of Tribal Nations and their culture and could be damaging to the Service's relationships with Tribes.

Alternative B – Remove all conical components– [Proposed Action Alternative]

In conclusion, this alternative helps to meet the purpose and needs of the Service to promote wildlife observation from within the shelter, improve recreational experience, decrease unauthorized activities inside the shelter, and consider historic integrity while repairing the shelter. Additionally, this alternative balances the retention of some of the history of the refuge's development from the skilled labor of the WPA and CCC, while being more culturally sensitive and respectful to Tribes whose culture does include the use of teepees going forward in an effort to strengthen the government-to-government relationships. This alternative re-evaluates and modifies or abandons the use of similar looking Tribal teepee architecture and may help build more meaningful and stronger relationships with Tribal governments by creating a more inclusive recreational facility. This alternative has an adverse effect on the historical structure as define in the National Historic Preservation Act. The Service will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the State Historical Preservation Office to mitigate the

adverse effects. Additional details on the stipulations of the MOA can be found in the section on State coordination. In brief, negotiated terms are:

- Prior to improvement work, an architectural professional shall document the Show Pool Shelter according to the SHPO's Recordation Standards.
- The USFWS shall install onsite interpretation with a sign or panel(s) (The "Sign") that interprets the significance of the Show Pool Shelter in the context of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge.

Alternative C – Retain conical base but remove cone tops

As described above, the most beneficial impacts of this alternative are that it would preserve more of the original structure of the shelter and maintain its unique appearance while also providing for better wildlife observation.

This approach may still have adverse effects to the historical structure. It would also not significantly improve visitor use of the shelter for wildlife observation or hosting environmental education programs. This approach may present a risk of the resulting aesthetics of the structure remaining too strong of a resemblance to the initial conical design or even being truer to wigwam form as the original well-known name suggested. Although current local Tribal staff have not indicated a preference for an alternative, it is unclear if or how this alternative may impact a government-to-government relationship with future local Tribal staff.

List of Sources, Agencies, and Persons Consulted

List of Preparers and Reviewers

Sara Siekierski, Refuge Manager

Sara Giles, Visitor Services Manager

James Myster, Regional Historic Preservation Officer/Archaeologist

Kristin Rasmussen, Conservation Planner

Jeanne Holler, Conservation Planning Lead

Sara Quinn, Division Chief, Natural Resource and Conservation Planning

Christie Deloria, Michigan Native American Liaison

Allison Smart, Regional Native American Liaison

Cathy Nigg, Refuge Supervisor

State Coordination

In a meeting on March 24, 2021 The State Historic Preservation Office (State) provided review and expressed general support of the findings (with some minor technical adjustments) to the Historic Context and National Register of Historic Places Eligibility Evaluation for the Seney National Wildlife Refuge (July, 2021). Additionally, the draft Environmental Assessment and Section 106 review determination letter was provided to the State during the 45-day public comment period July 25, 2022 through September 8, 2022. The Service received a response from the State dated August 19, 2022 clarifying their opinion on a determination for each alternative considered. In a letter dated January 13, 2023, the Service requested consultation for the development of a Memorandum of Agreement to mitigate adverse effects for the preferred alternative B. A response from the State dated March 20, 2023 requested additional information including a summary of the public comments and a copy of the June 15, 2021 archeological survey. The response also indicated that if the federal agency and the State concur that the adverse effect cannot be avoided, the Section 106 process will not conclude until the consultation process is complete, a Memorandum of Agreement is developed, executed, and implemented, and, if applicable, the formal comments of the Advisory Council have been received, 36 CFR § 800.6.

The Service submitted the requested information to the State on June 6, 2023. Also, on August 8, 2023, the Service's Regional Historic Preservation Officer submitted to the State a draft Memorandum of Agreement take into account the effect of the undertaking and propose stipulations to mitigate the adverse effects. The final agreement was signed by the State on March 12 and will be signed by the Service representative with the decision document associated with this assessment. Stipulations within the agreement are as follows:

1. Prior to improvement work, an architectural professional shall document the Show Pool Shelter according to the State Historic Preservation Office Standards.
 - a. Digital photos provided on a compact disc or digital video disc may supplement digital materials for printed photographs.
 - b. The State shall have thirty days to review and approve the draft recordation. The Service shall revise the documentation accordingly before submitting the final copies. Once the documentation has been reviewed and approved, a copies and pdfs of the final photographs and

- documentation shall be provided to the Service, State and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.
- c. The State will submit the recordation package to the Archives of Michigan.
 - d. A hard copy recordation documentation will be provided by the Service to a local archive or repository.
2. The Service shall install onsite interpretation with a sign or panel(s) that interprets the significance of the Show Pool Shelter into the context of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge.
- a. The sign will be located near the Show Pool Shelter, on a site agreed upon by the Service and State.
 - b. The Sign will be constructed of durable outdoor product.
 - c. Content, including text and images, will be developed by the Service in consultation with the State. The Service will provide the State with a draft of the content and the State shall have thirty days to review and provide comments. The Service will consider all timely comments made by the State in developing the final designs and text for the content. The Sign may be updated by the USFWS as needed.

These stipulations were considered in the evaluation of impacts for this Environmental Assessment. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation was invited to participate in the development of a Memorandum of Agreement in an email dated January 13, 2023. They did not submit any comments for this project.

Tribal Outreach

The Service requested staff recommendations from Bay Mills Indian Community and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of the Chippewa Indians during coordination meetings in the previous years for how the agency should address the structures. In April of 2021 letters were sent via email to all Tribal historic preservation officers and wildlife biologists within the ceded territory to seek suggestions for how to address the shelter and how they might like to be involved. Additional follow up emails and phone calls were also made to Bay Mills Indian Community and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of the Chippewa Indians. No official recommendations have been made, however personal communications with a couple staff members from those two tribes indicate the structures do not resemble wigwams and therefore they do not feel comfortable making recommendations other than not to call them wigwams. Overall, there was a lack of response from the initial scoping effort in April of 2021.

At the onset of the public comment period for the draft environmental assessment, on July 25th, 2022, a letter was emailed to all Tribal Historic Preservation Officials of Federally Recognized Tribes within the 1836 ceded territory requesting comments to the draft Environmental Assessment for structural improvements to the structure. Natural Resource staff were also copied on this message that went to Bay Mills Indian Community, Grand Travers Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Only one Tribal employee responded with no preference for an alternative considering the shelter is not a wigwam and clarifying that the Anishinaabek, who are the indigenous people in this area, did not use teepees.

The service concludes from this coordination effort that it is not a concern for local Tribal Nations to keep the conical portions of the shelter that were originally constructed, but request we not refer to the shelter as “The Wigwams”.

Public Outreach

This project tiers from the 2009 Seney National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Public input during the development of the refuge’s Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) shaped the management direction of the refuge including the purpose and need for this work. Initial scoping began in March 2006 and concluded in October 2006 with approximately 30 written submissions received from the public. These were considered in the development of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge Draft Environmental Assessment which presented a range of alternatives for future management and identified the preferred alternative which was the draft CCP. The draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan and environmental assessment were released for public review on September 3, 2008; the comment period lasted 35 days and ended October 8, 2008. During the comment period the Refuge hosted an open house event to obtain comments. By the conclusion of the comment period, we received 14 written responses by organizations and individuals. All respondents who expressed an opinion endorsed the selection of preferred alternative and the general approach of the proposed future management of the refuge. The alternative that was selected became the final 2009 Comprehensive Conservation Plan. This plan lays out the general approach to managing habitat, wildlife, and people at Seney National Wildlife Refuge and directs day-to-day decision-making and actions.

On July 25, 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) released the Draft Environmental Assessment for proposed upgrades to the historic show pool

shelter. Following the release of the Draft Environmental Assessment, the Service opened a 45-day public comment period that ended on September 8, 2022. Members of the public were notified of the availability of the Draft Assessment through a press release posted on the Service website at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/seney> and sent out to 80 media contacts within the state of Michigan. A press release was printed in at least 4 newspapers beginning August 3rd and available online through September 8, 2022. An announcement about Environmental Assessment public comment period was also made using the Seney National Wildlife Refuge Facebook page.

During the comment period, 12 unique pieces of correspondence were received on the Draft Environmental Assessment, including correspondence from a Tribe, a state agency and 10 individuals. Correspondence reviewers derived 35 unique comments, 7 of which were substantive comments. The most common topic found in the individual comments was support for or opposition to the proposed alternatives. Three commenters were generally in support of the Service's preferred alternative, 2 had no stance and 7 were generally opposed to the preferred alternative. Substantive comments were addressed in the final environmental assessment. A full analysis and summary of comments and agency response can be found in Appendix D of the Environmental Assessment.

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Appendix A – Applicable Statutes and Executive Orders

Statutes and Executive Orders Not Requiring Additional Consideration:

There are no anticipated impacts to resources associated with the laws and/or executive orders outlined below.

Administrative Procedures Act of 1946: The preferred alternative would not involve developing or issuing regulations (e.g., rulemaking).

Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, as amended: The preferred alternative would not occur in Alaska.

Anadromous Fish Conservation Act of 1965: The preferred alternative will not take place in an area where anadromous fish are found.

Coastal Barriers Resources Act of 1982: The preferred alternative would not occur on a coast.

Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended: The preferred alternative would not occur on a coast.

Consultations for Essential Fish Habitat: This consultation requirement is only applicable to marine fish and shellfish. The preferred alternative would not occur in a marine environment.

Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986: No wetlands would be purchased under the preferred alternative.

Executive Order 11644, Use of Off-Road Vehicles on Public Land: No off-road motor vehicle trails would be modified, designated or established under the preferred alternative.

Executive Order 12866, Regulatory Planning and Review: No changes to new or existing regulations would occur under the preferred alternative.

Executive Order 13563, Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review: No changes to new or existing regulations would occur under the preferred alternative.

Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981, as amended: The preferred alternative would not convert farmland to nonagricultural uses.

Federal Cave Protection Act of 1988: No significant caves exist within the proposed action area.

Plant Protection Act of 2000: The preferred alternative would not include the interstate commerce of federally designated noxious weeds.

Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act of 1958: The proposed federal action will not affect any stream or other body of water and mitigation measures will be used to mitigate impacts that may occur to fish and wildlife resources.

Fishery (Magnuson) Conservation and Management Act of 1976: The preferred alternative would not occur in a marine environment.

Executive Order 11988, Floodplain Management: It was determined there would be no effect to floodplains for this proposed action and as such there is no need to reduce the risk of flood loss or other responsibilities under this executive order.

Executive Order 11990, Protection of Wetlands: There will be no undertaking of wetlands for this project although wetlands are adjacent to the project area. The action could lead to long term enhancement and beneficial values of wetlands as the public engages with this habitat and gains a connection to it but this potential benefit is removed from this executive order.

Executive Order 12962, Recreational Fisheries: The proposed action does not have an nexus to improve the quality, function, and sustainable productivity and distribution of U.S. aquatic resources for increased recreational fishing opportunities

Lacey Act of 1900: The preferred alternative would not involve the importation, exportation, transportation, sale, receipt, acquisition or purchase of any fish, wildlife or plants.

Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, as amended: The preferred alternative would not occur in a marine environment.

Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp Act of 1934: The preferred alternative would not include any migratory bird hunting, and no project funding would come from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund.

Paleontological Resources Protection Act of 2009: No paleontological resources exist within the proposed project area. An archeological survey was completed in 2023 by the regional historic preservation officer that confirmed this (Myster, 2023).

Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899: There is not a navigable waterway within the proposed project area.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976: The preferred alternative would not involve hazardous waste.

Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974: No potable water exists in or near the proposed action area.

Water Resources Planning Act of 1965: The preferred alternative would not require review by the Water Resources Council because no river basin plans or federal water projects would occur.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, as amended: No designated wild and scenic rivers occur within the proposed project area.

Wilderness Act of 1964, as amended: No designated wilderness areas occur within the proposed project area.

Statutes with a Nexus:

American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978: The refuge consulted with federally recognized Native American Tribes with potential interest in the preferred alternative and determined there would be no infringement on traditional religious rights and cultural practices. The preferred alternative would not occur on a religious site and would not limit or change the ability of tribes to the refuge.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990: The preferred alternative will impact a public use structure. Any modifications or improvements will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and accessible to people of all abilities.

Antiquities Act of 1906: The preferred alternative occurs in an area of known historic interest. No examination of ruins, excavation of archaeological sites or gathering of objects would occur. The state and regional historic preservation officers have been consulted on this project and will be contacted prior to the start of any construction and mitigation measures will be in place if unanticipated antiquities are found during any construction periods. See the Cultural and Historic Resources Section for additional information.

Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974: The preferred alternative occurs in an area of known historic interest and is not expected to result in the loss of destruction of significant scientific, historical or archeological data. An archeological survey was completed on June 15, 2021 for site improvements that

include minor parking and road realignments and installing a new vault toilet facility. No artifacts were found, and the results indicated much of the area has been previously disturbed, likely from original construction. See the Cultural and Historic Resources Section for additional information.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended: The proposed action and alternatives would not involve the excavation of archaeological sites. The state and regional historic preservation officers will be contacted prior to the start of any construction and mitigation measures are in place if unanticipated objects of archaeological and historic significance are found. See the Cultural and Historic Resources Section for additional information.

Architectural Barriers Act: The preferred alternative will impact visitor amenities. Any modifications or improvements will be compliant with the Architectural Barriers Act and accessible to people of all abilities.

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940, as amended: Bald eagles nest on the refuge, however no nests are located in or near the proposed action area. No take of bald eagles, including their parts, nests or eggs would occur. National Bald Eagle Management Guidelines would be followed to minimize and mitigate disturbance that would injure an eagle, decrease its productivity or cause nest abandonment (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2007). See the Special Status Species section for additional information.

Clean Air Act of 1970: The use of construction equipment under the preferred alternative would have a negligible impact on air quality and comply with all federal, state, local and tribal clean air act requirements.

Clean Water Act of 1972, as amended: The preferred alternative would not discharge pollutants into surface waters. Contractors would be required to mitigate erosion, sedimentation and runoff during construction.

Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services Field Office has been consulted prior to the start of any construction to ensure that the preferred alternative would not jeopardize the continued existence of any listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat of such species. See the Candidate, Threatened and Endangered Species and Critical Habitat Section for more information.

Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956: This law establishes a comprehensive national fish and wildlife policy and authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to take steps required for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fisheries resources and wildlife resources through research, acquisition of refuge lands, development of existing facilities. The preferred action is on a national wildlife refuge and considers repairs to an existing facilitating promoting public use and engagement.

Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929: The preferred alternative would not interfere with the protection of migratory birds. No land would be acquired with or maintained by dollars from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. See Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Special Status Species and Terrestrial Wildlife and Aquatic Species Sections for more information.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, as amended: The preferred alternative could temporarily disturb and displace migratory birds during construction, however sufficient refugia would be available in adjacent areas. See Threatened and Endangered Species and Other Special Status Species and Terrestrial Wildlife and Aquatic Species Sections for more information and any specific mitigation measures.

National Environmental Policy Act of 1969: This environmental assessment is a public document prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. Analyses included in this document will determine if the proposed federal actions would have the potential to cause significant impacts to the quality of the human environment.

National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended: The preferred alternative considers impacts to cultural and historic resources of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge Historic District and Show Pool Shelter. Consultation specific to the Show Pool Shelter was completed as part of the environmental assessment public review process. See Cultural and Historic Resources Section for more information and specific mitigation measures are summarized in the State Coordination Section.

National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997: The preferred alternative would result in continuing to offer priority wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities at Show Pool Shelter unit meeting the intent of this act and managing the Seney National Wildlife Refuge.

Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990: The preferred alternative would not occur in an area with known Native American cultural items

or involve the repatriation or transfer of such items. See the Tribal Consultation Section for more information on how tribes would be informed and consulted with regarding the proposed action. Mitigation measures are in place if unanticipated cultural items are found. See the Cultural and Historic Resources section for additional information and specific mitigation measures.

Noise Control Act of 1972: The preferred alternative would involve the use of construction equipment and would not significantly add to noise levels in the proposed project area due to the medium ambient volume of highway traffic adjacent to the site.

Refuge Recreation Act of 1962, as amended: The preferred alternative would benefit wildlife-dependent recreation by increasing usability of the Show Pool Site and maintaining amenities in support of recreational opportunities. See the Visitor Use and Experience section for additional detail.

Executive Orders with a Nexus:

Executive Order 11593, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment: The preferred alternative considers impacts to cultural and historic resources. See Cultural and Historic Resources Section for more information and specific mitigation measures are summarized in the State Coordination Section.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice for Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations: The preferred alternative would not have disproportionately high or adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations. The preferred alternative would provide improved recreational opportunities equitably to all refuge visitors. See Environmental Justice Section for more information.

Executive Order 12996, Management and General Public Use of the National Wildlife Refuge System: The preferred alternative would continue to fulfill the biological integrity and environmental health requirements of the refuge system, ensure collaboration between the refuge, local municipal and state governments and federally recognized tribes and provide the public with the opportunity to provide input on the proposed project (e.g., public comment period was for 45 days). See Appendix D for the Public Comment Analysis Report which includes a summary of the public comment period and any agency response to substantive comments.

Executive Order 13007, Indian Sacred Sites: The preferred alternative would not occur in an area with known sacred sites. See the Tribal Consultation Section for more information on how tribes have been informed and consulted regarding the proposed action.

Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species: Under the preferred alternative, the refuge would require all construction equipment and materials be free and clear of plant material before entering or exiting the proposed project area to prevent the spread of invasive species. Any reseeded or planting post construction would use native species.

Executive Order 13175, Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments: No statutory, regulatory or policy changes would occur under the preferred alternative. See the Tribal Consultation Section for more information on how tribes would be informed and consulted regarding the proposed action.

Executive Order 13186, Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds: The preferred alternative would not have a measurable negative effect on migratory bird populations. See the Special Status Species Section for more information on potential impacts and mitigation measures.

Executive Order 13990, Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis: Under the preferred alternative no regulations would be promulgated, or other actions taken that would conflict with the national objectives of this executive order.

Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad: The preferred alternative would not have disproportionately high and/or adverse impacts on human health, the environment or other climate-related impacts on disadvantaged communities. The restoration of Ike's Creek would provide improved greenspace equitably to all refuge visitors. See Environmental Justice Section for more information.

Appendix B – Photos and Drawings



Photo 1: The Show Pool Shelter in 1937.



Photo 2: The Show Pool Shelter in the 1940s.



Photo 3: The Show Pool Shelter in 1955. The end doors have been added. It is now covered in asphalt shingles.



Photo 4: The Show Pool Shelter in the 1960s. The shelter appears to have lost its window openings.



Photo 5: The Show Pool Shelter in 1974 when it was being covered with cedar shakes for the first time.



Photo 6: The Show Pool Shelter in 1974 after the work was completed.



Photo 7: Current Structure as seen in 2015.



Photo 8 of stone fireplace in 2022.



Photo 9. looking through doorways of structure in 2022.



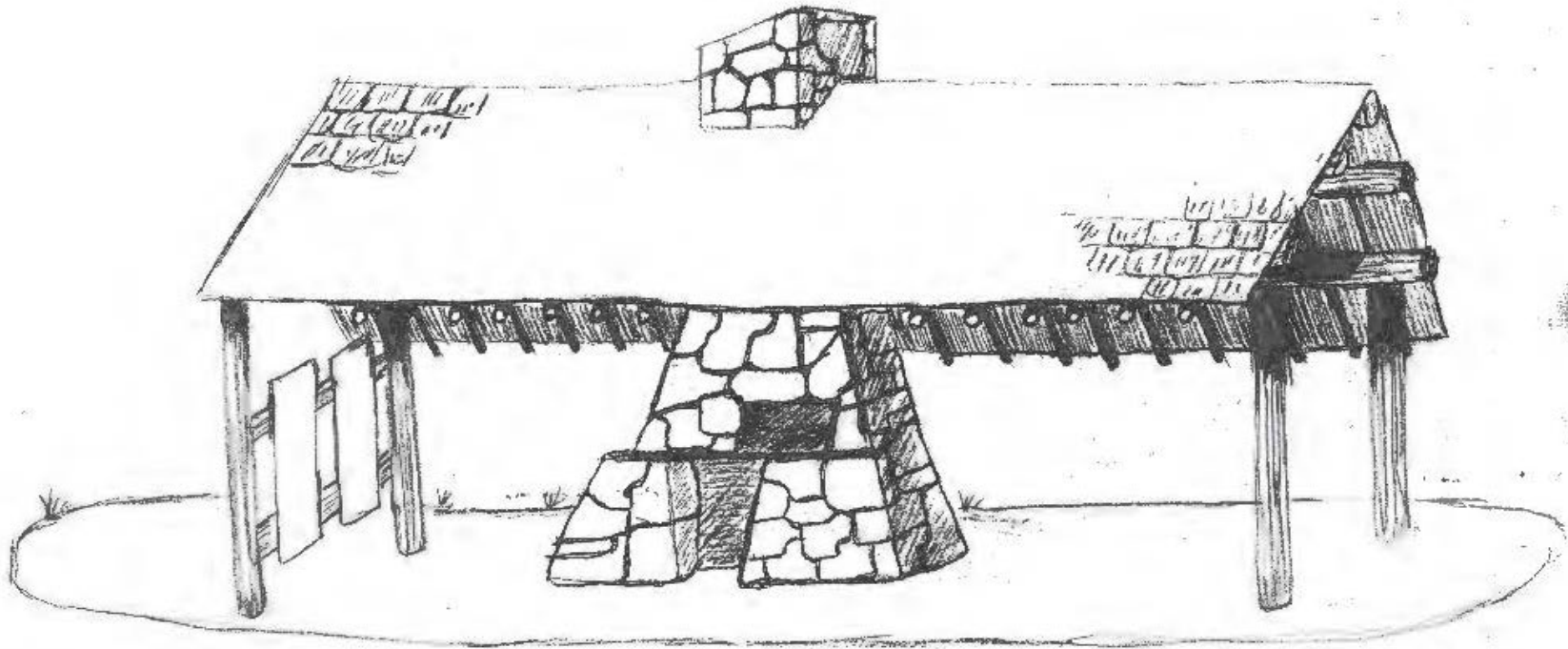
Photo 10. Interior View of Shelter in 2022.



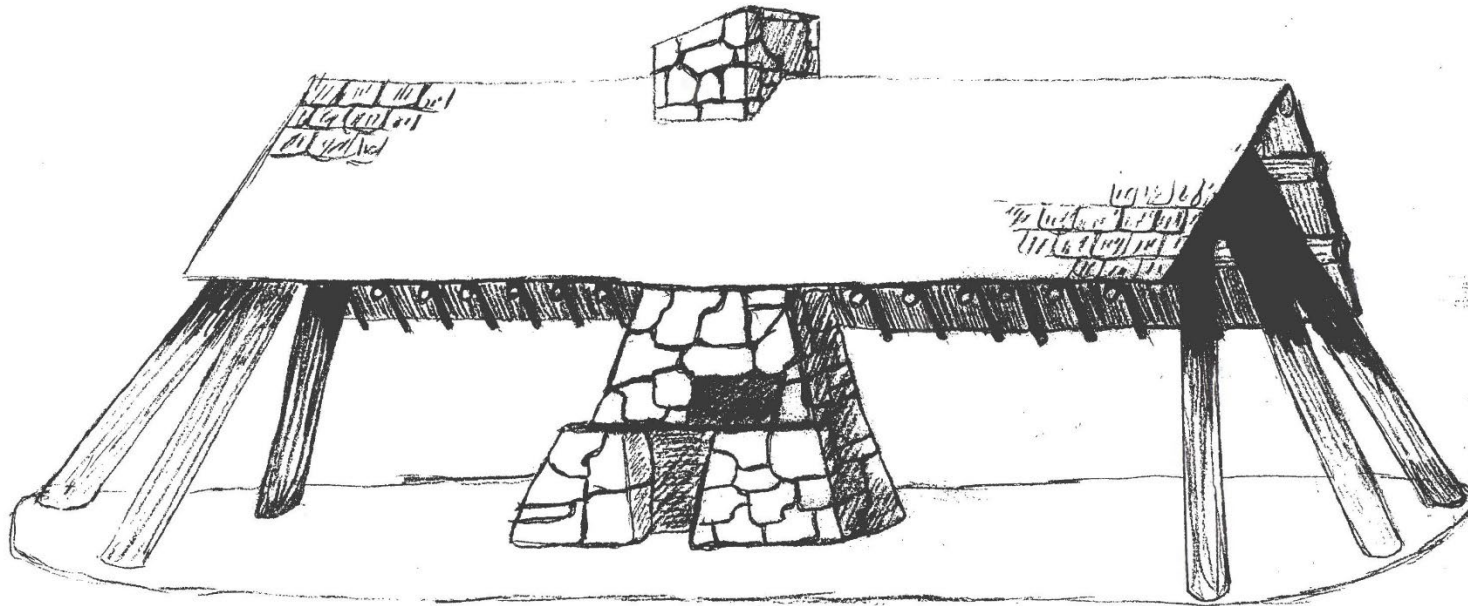
Photo 11. View from Highway M-77 looking west towards the shelter and general access site in 2021.



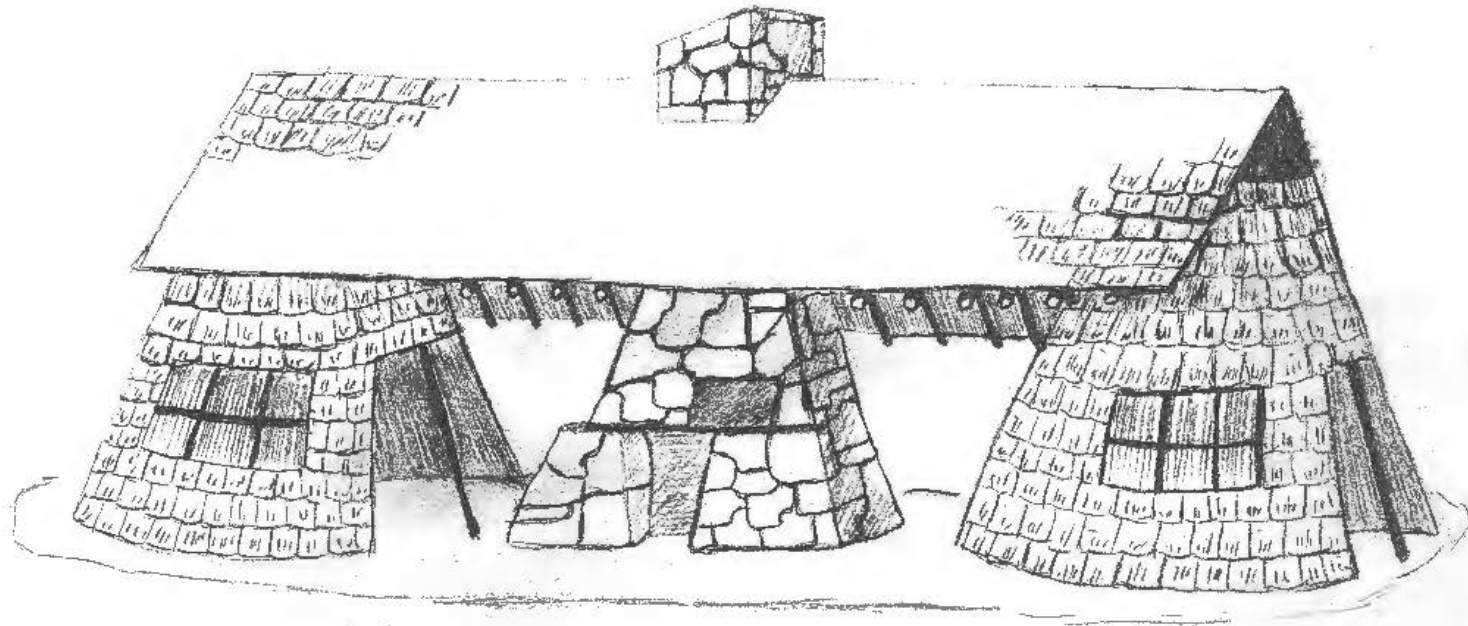
Photo 12. View from Shelter looking east to Highway M-77 in 2021.



Concept Drawing 1 for Alternative B - With vertical posts, a wind break and interpretive panels.



Concept Drawing 2 for Alternative B – Keeping some angled support timbers.



Concept Drawing for Alternative C – Retain conical base but remove cone tops and open up front and back windows.

Appendix C – Project Maps

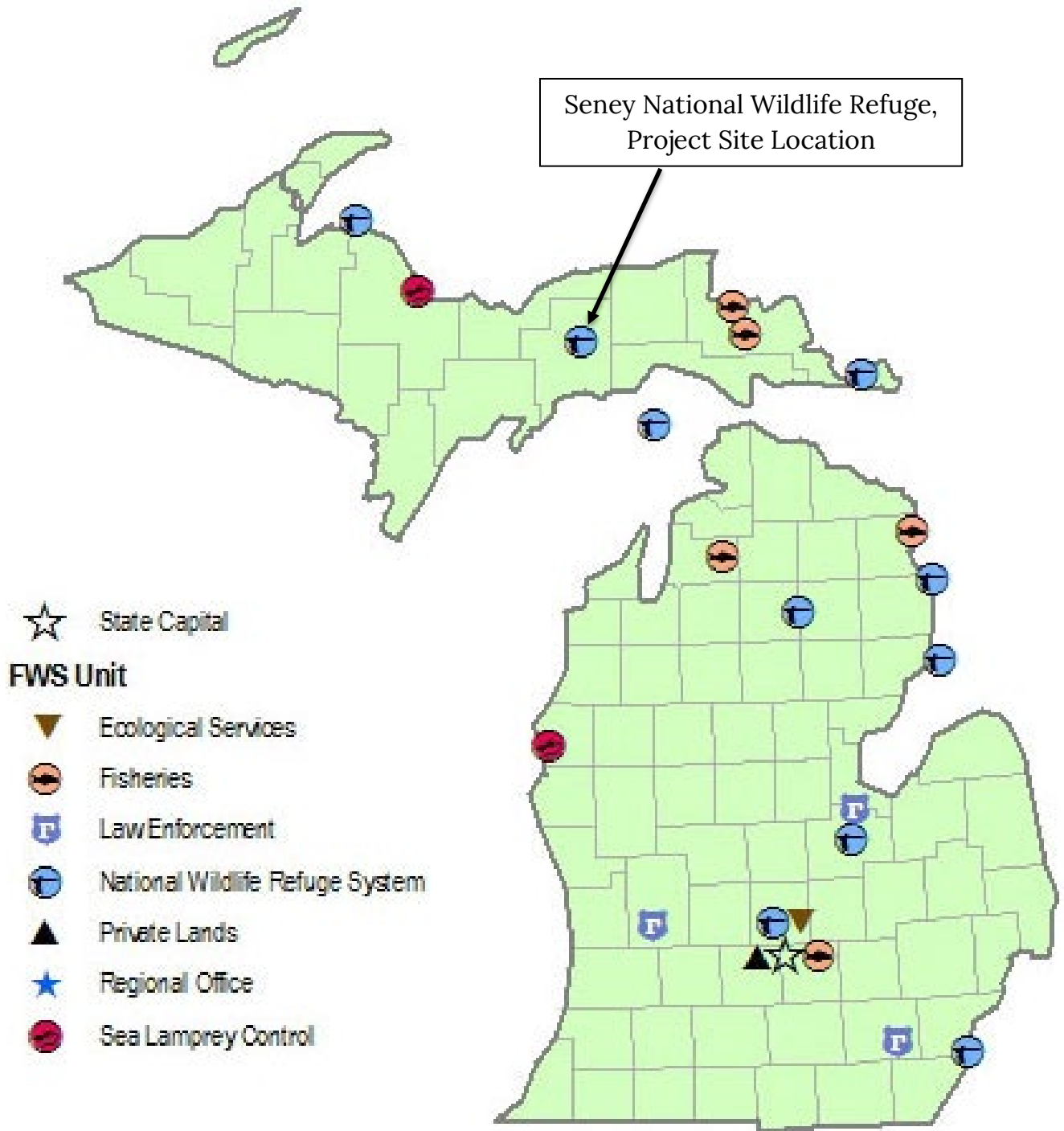


Figure 1. Michigan General Refuge Vicinity Map.

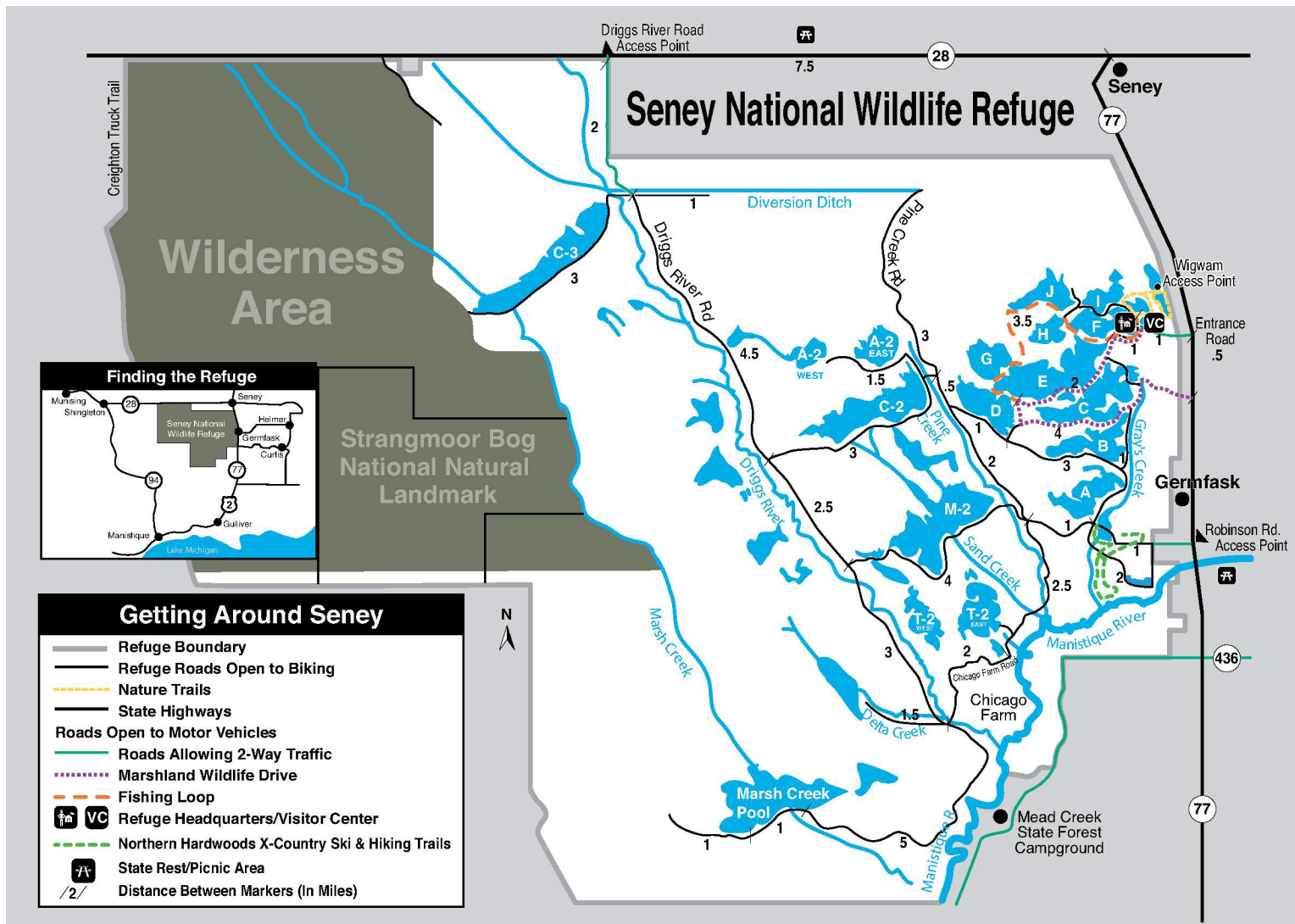


Figure 2. General project location map. See Show Pool Access Area (Wigwam Access Point).

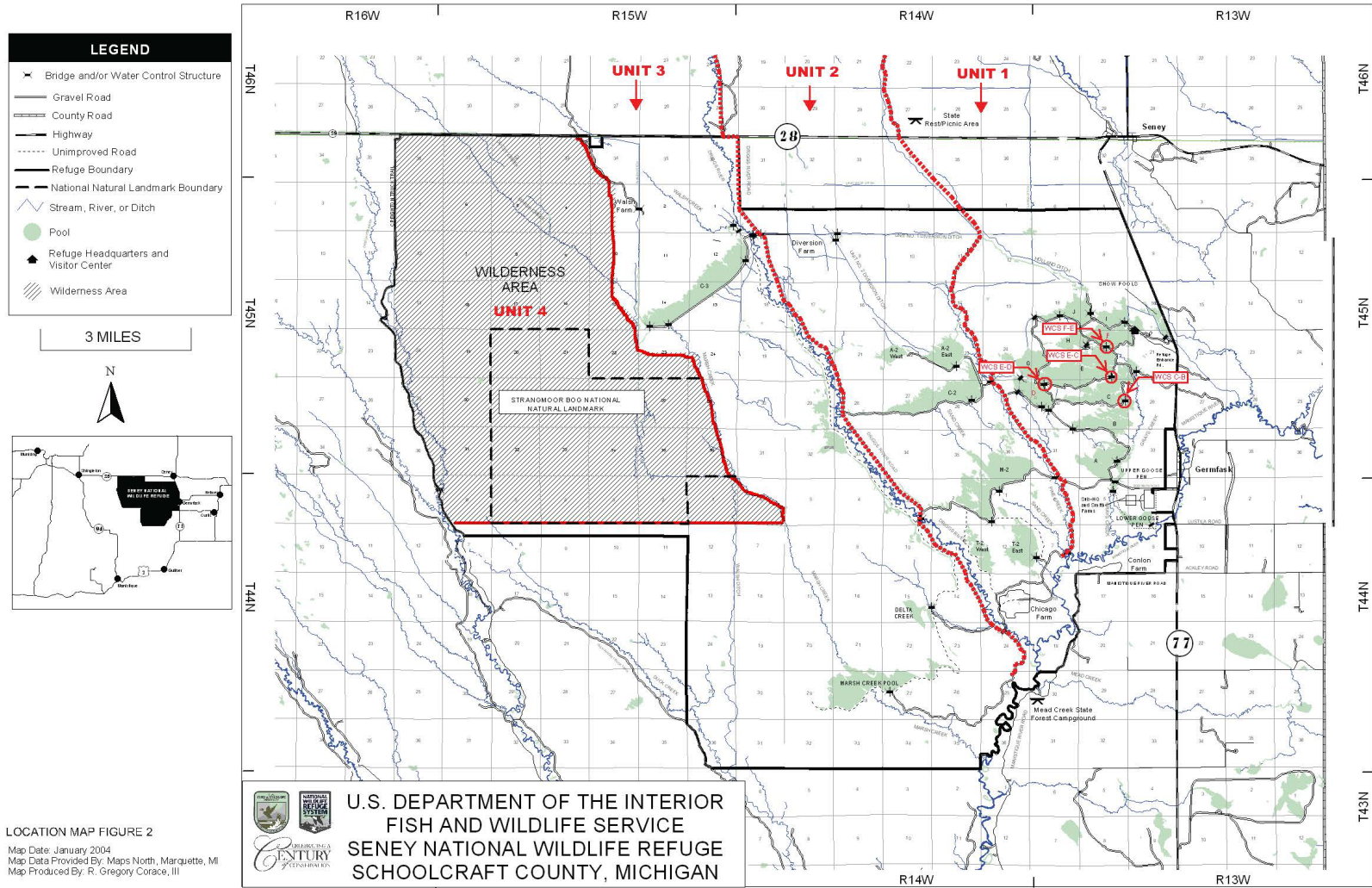


Figure 3. Refuge Unit Map

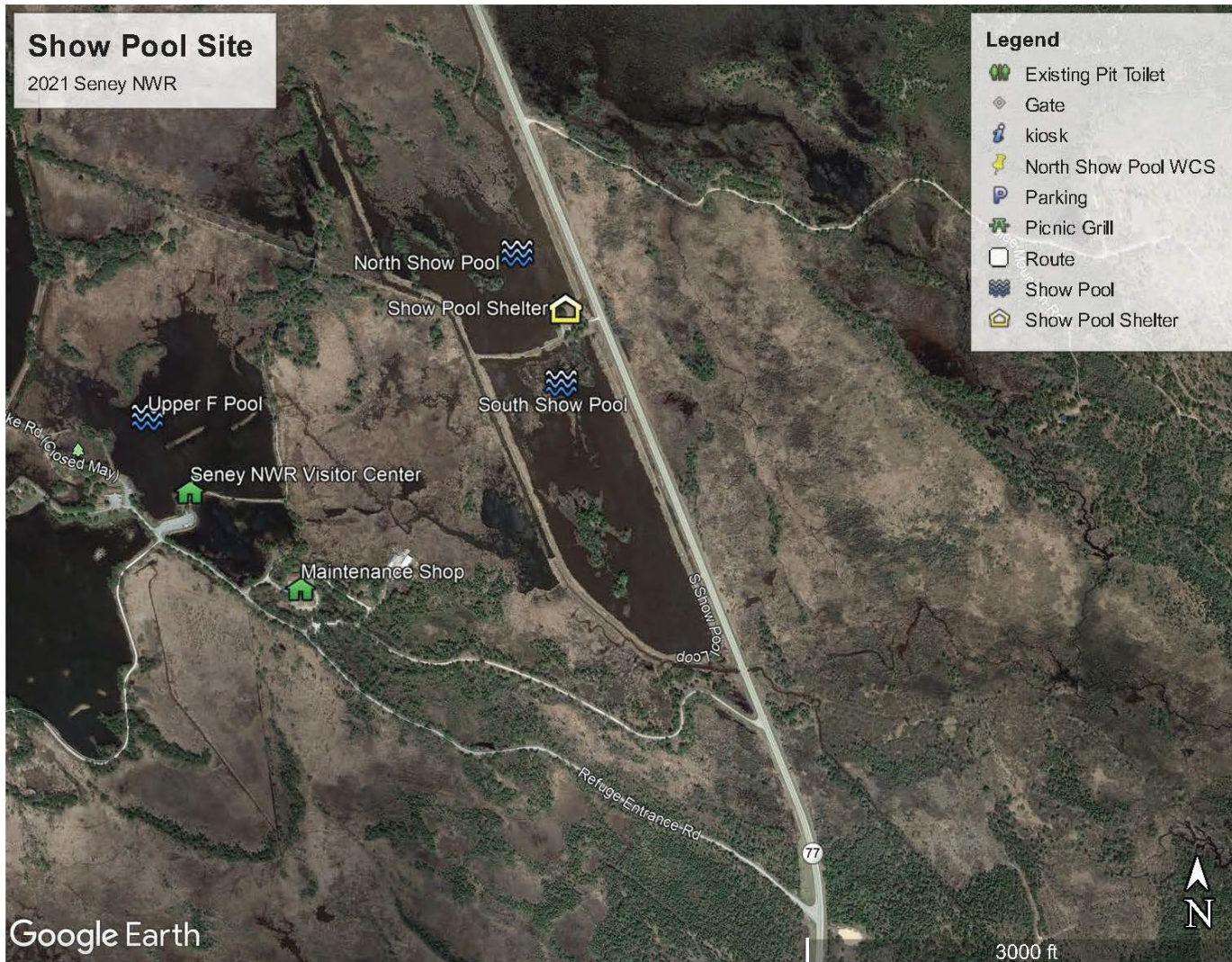


Figure 4. Aerial photo view of general project site location, Show Pool Shelter

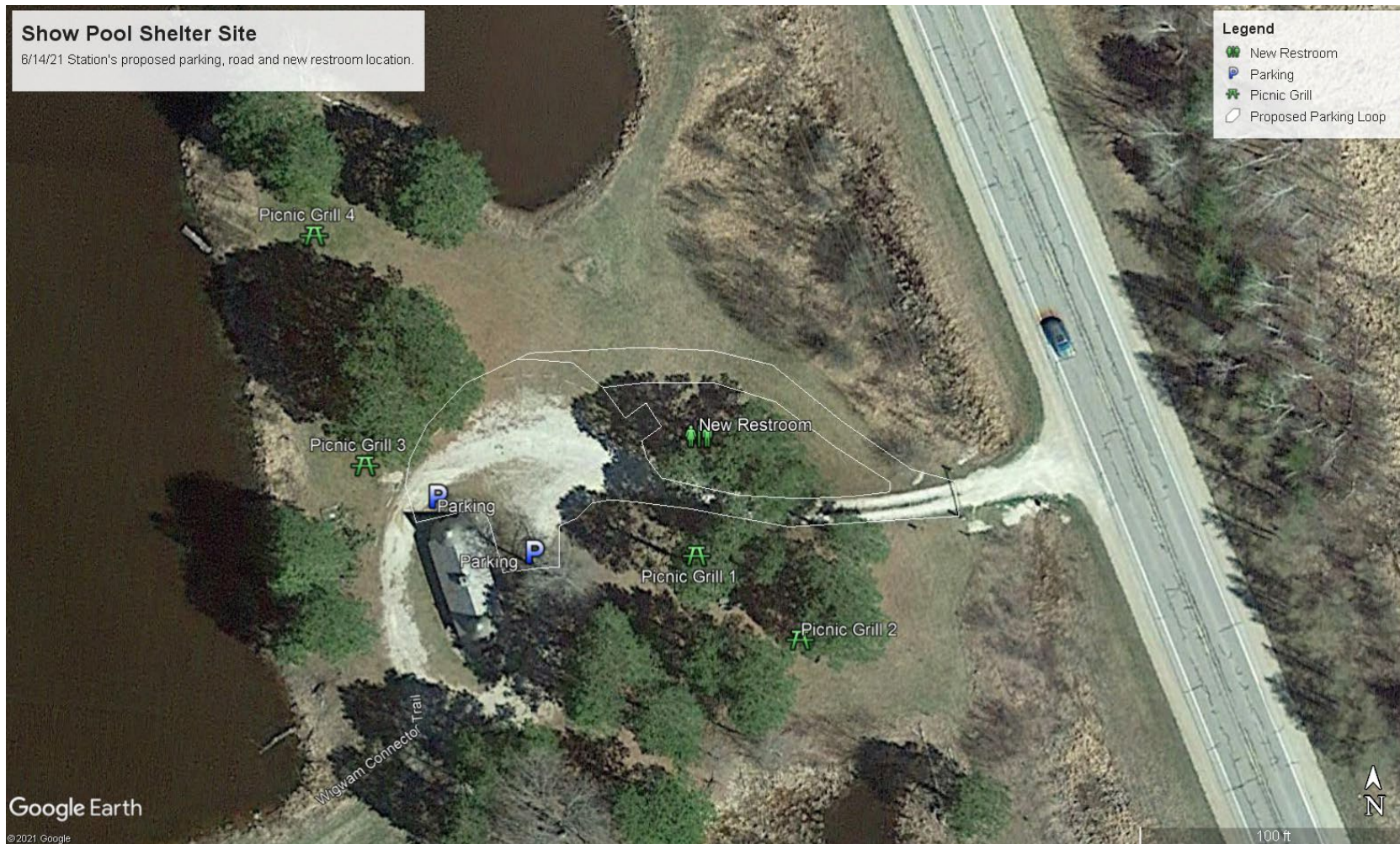


Figure 5. Proposed site changes to parking, road, and outhouse in the surrounding environment of the historic picnic shelter.

Appendix D – Public Comments Analysis Report

Summary of public comment period

On July 25, 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) released the Draft Environmental Assessment for proposed upgrades to the historic show pool shelter. Following the release of the Draft Environmental Assessment, the Service opened a 45-day public comment period that ended on September 8, 2022. Members of the public were notified of the availability of the Draft Assessment through a press release posted on the Service website at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/seney> and sent out to 80 media contacts within the state of Michigan. A press release was printed in at least 4 newspapers beginning August 3rd and available online through September 8, 2022. An announcement about Environmental Assessment public comment period was also made using the Seney National Wildlife Refuge Facebook page. Substantive comments are addressed in this final environmental assessment through this Appendix.

The Comment Analysis Process

Comment analysis is a process used to compile and correlate similar public comments into a format that can be used by decision makers and the Environmental Assessment planning team. Comment analysis assists the team in organizing, clarifying, and addressing technical information pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations. It also aids in identifying the topics and issues to be evaluated and considered throughout the planning process.

In total, the Service received comments from 12 submitters on various aspects of the Draft Environmental Assessment. Members of the planning team read and analyzed all comments, including those of a technical nature; opinions, feelings, and preferences of one element or one potential alternative over another; and comments of a personal or philosophical nature. The team grouped and organized comments by issues and themes, drafted concern statements, and participated in developing this comment summary.

Although the analysis process attempts to capture the full range of public concerns, comments from people who chose to respond are not able to be identified or represented. Therefore, it is important to note that the comments received and summarized here do not necessarily represent the sentiments of the entire public. Furthermore, this was not a vote-counting process, and the emphasis was on the content of the comment rather than the number of times a comment was received.

Content Analysis

This is the basic summary, which provides information on the numbers and types of comments received. Data show the amount of correspondence received by organization type, such as, government agencies, organizations, individuals, etc. While the Service acknowledges comments expressing a feeling, opinion, or a preference for a particular alternative, those comments are not considered substantive and are not included in the responses summarized.

Nature of Comments Received

During the comment period, 12 unique pieces of correspondence were received on the Draft Environmental Assessment, including correspondence from a Tribe, a state agency and 10 unaffiliated individuals. Correspondence reviewers derived 35 unique comments, 7 of which were considered substantive comments. The most common topic found in the individual comments was support for or opposition to the proposed alternatives. Three commenters were generally in support of the Service's preferred alternative, 2 had no stance and 7 were generally opposed to the preferred alternative. While the Service acknowledges comments expressing a feeling, opinion, or a preference for a particular alternative, those comments are not considered substantive and are not included in the responses.

Organizations that Commented

Tribal Government

Bay Mills Indian Community

State Agency

Michigan State Historic Preservation Office

Unaffiliated Individuals

10 individuals submitted correspondence. Their specific identification is not included in this summary of information.

Concerns or Issues expressed

Concerns or issues expressed among all entities (agencies, organizations, and unaffiliated individuals) were:

- Comments related to the fact that this structure has connections to both European and indigenous communities and their history due to its ties to

the CCC, but also its inaccurate depiction of shelters used by the indigenous people in this area.

- Concerns that the agency has no interest in cultural preservation.
- Concerns about involving and seeking Tribal recommendations.
- Concerns about not being aware of the name change from “Wigwams” to “Show Pool Shelter” or why “Show Pool Shelter” was chosen.
- Concerns about alternatives not being evaluated in the environmental assessment.
- Concerns about funding for the shelter.
- Concerns about altering character defining features of the structure.

Points of clarification in the Environmental Assessment

Seek Tribal input for recommendations

Two comments were received that had similar recommendations to seek Tribal input for the best course of action. In response to both comments, it is both law and policy for the Service to work together with Tribal Nations to improve and enhance conservation of fish and wildlife resources and shared natural and cultural resource goals and objectives. The Service’s Native American Policy (510 FW 1) directs us to “meaningfully involve and work collaboratively with Tribal governments in our actions when we determine the actions may affect their cultural or religious interests, including cultural resources”. For this particular project, the Service requested staff recommendations from Bay Mills Indian Community and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of the Chippewa Indians during coordination meetings in 2019 for how the agency should address the structures. In April of 2021 letters were sent via email to all Tribal historic preservation officers and wildlife biologists within the ceded territory to seek suggestions for how to address the shelter and how they might like to be involved. Additional follow up emails and phone calls were made to staff at Bay Mills Indian Community and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of the Chippewa Indians. Input was also sought from regional Service Tribal employees whose Tribes do use teepees as well as from Service Tribal Liaisons for consideration to Service Tribal relationships outside of the local area. Most recently, on July 25, 2022, a letter was emailed to all Tribal Historic Preservation Officers of Tribes within the 1836 ceded territory requesting comments to the draft Environmental Assessment for structural improvements to the structure. Only one Tribal employee responded with no preference for an alternative considering the shelter is not a wigwam and clarifying that the Anishinaabek, who are the

indigenous people in this area, did not use teepees. The final Environmental Assessment will include a summary of Tribal outreach efforts and input received.

Funding for the shelter improvements

A single comment was received that stated “Maybe the money should be spent on the wildlife, after all it is a wildlife refuge.” In response to this comment, funding for this project was awarded under a Presidential Initiative and with Congressional funding from the Great American Outdoor Act, Pub. L. 116-152, to address the deferred maintenance backlog on federal public lands. Use of funding from this law must comply with the stipulations of Pub. L. 116-152 and related Service priorities. The Show Pool Access Area Rehabilitation is one of four major initiatives the refuge received funding for that complied with the spending requirements of this law. The general goal of the Show Pool Access Area Rehabilitation Project, which includes several components in addition to the shelter improvements, is to improve existing facilities for both wildlife and visitors. In addition to improving the shelter, funding for this initiative will also benefit wildlife with completion of the North Show Pool low hazard dam repairs, which had been breached since spring of 2018.

One commenter stated, “I have left a portion of my estate to the Seney Wildlife Refuge for upkeep and repairs to the ‘Wigwams’. I would be inclined to remove the refuge from my estate if they are changed.” In response to this comment, the Service appreciates your interest and commitment to keep this area available for use by the public that visit the refuge. The shelter is currently in need of repair. As we examined the shelter for renovation, we also thought about possible improvements, while maintaining as much of the historic character as possible. These included improved wildlife viewing, human safety, and cultural awareness. We are sorry you do not agree with the changes that are being proposed and hope you continue to enjoy the refuge.

Name change from “Wigwams” to “Show Pool Shelter”

Several comments were made regarding a lack of awareness of the name change and why we call it the “Show Pool Shelter”. Since 2018, staff have been working to update signs, brochures and other written materials to reflect this name change. Refuge staff had stopped using the name “Wigwams” since the structure is not a wigwam when it was pointed out by members of local Tribes. The two management units adjacent to the shelter have always been referred to as North Show Pool and South Show Pool. Since the shelter is located next to these units, refuge staff thought the name “Show Pool Shelter” was fitting and helped distinguish it from the

picnic shelter at the headquarters site. It is speculated that the pools were named "show pools" originally to serve as wildlife management demonstration areas for the public to see. Other National Wildlife Refuges established from this era also have units identified as "Show Pool" and are similar in that they are smaller units immediately adjacent to public roads. Although the units currently may not look like pools or inland lakes due to lack of water, we are in the process of repairing damaged structures that will allow them to hold water once again.

Personal connections to the Show Pool Shelter

Several people submitted comments sharing their personal connections to the site including childhood memories, bringing their families to the site, working on the shelter, or fundraising to preserve it. The Service considered the cultural and visitor impacts to each alternative in the draft Assessment and recognized some people will be disappointed to see the shelter changed. In consideration of these impacts, Alternative B and C aim to reduce the burden of loss by keeping the sense of place of the structure by maintaining many of the original characteristics including the shelter location, stone fireplace and log timber type construction. Continuing to offer a shelter with picnic tables and access to the site will ensure family traditions can continue at the same location once improvements are finished. The site will continue to be a place to remind visitors of this site's cultural history and the early development of the refuge by the CCC/WPA. Interpretive panels at the site can help share this rich history. The recreational opportunities the site currently offers will continue to be offered but with improvements that overall result in a more positive experience for visitors recreating at the site.

Recordation of the layout, materials and photos of the existing structure would be completed prior to altering the structure to preserve historical information about the shelter. A comment was made about loss of a refuge landmark. From a distance, the shelter will appear less unique and perhaps less memorable to visitors passing by on the highway and therefore may draw in fewer incidental visitors. Although it may appear less unique from a distance, it will be visually appealing by retaining much of the natural and rustic features from the original skilled CCC/WPA laborers. To highlight its custom construction, interpretation of the site could draw visitor's attention to the skilled craftsmanship of the stone fireplace as well directing them to other historical structures within walking distance of the site such as the South Show Pool rock spillway. Final mitigation measures were negotiated and will be implemented with the State Historic Preservation Office through a Memorandum of Agreement. No changes were made to the Assessment

of impacts because of these comments. The mitigation measures are incorporated by reference into the final environmental assessment in the state coordination statement.

Addressing NEPA Time Limit Requirements

Any action put forth in this Final Environmental Assessment must meet Section 106 requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act. To meet these requirements consultation with required parties occurred during the Environmental Assessment process. A final determination on action cannot occur without completion of the Section 106 process and as such the decision could not be finalized until a Memorandum of Agreement was developed resulting in an extension of the NEPA timeline for completing an environmental assessment past the one-year timeframe. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service submitted a timeline extension request pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended by the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023, 42 U.S.C. § 4336a(g)(2) for approval to the Department of Interior April 22, 2024. The request included a new timeline for completion of this assessment by May 31, 2024 as the agency considers this to be the minimum necessary time to complete an environmental assessment. The extension was approved by the Department May 3, 2024.

Concern Response Report

The following section summarized the substantive comments received during the Draft Environmental Assessment public review comment process. As defined in the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, comments are considered substantive if they:

- Question, with reasonable basis, the accuracy of the information in the document
- Question, with reasonable basis, the adequacy of, methodology for or assumptions used for the environmental analysis
- Present new information relevant to the analysis
- Present reasonable alternatives other than those presented in the environmental assessment
- Cause changes or revisions in one or more of the alternatives

Substantive comments are organized by topic and further consolidated into concern statements or new information. Comments have been summarized and paraphrased. Representative quotes are then provided for each concern statement. The Service provides a response for each concern statement. Where appropriate,

the text of the Final Environmental Assessment will be revised to address the substantive comments.

Topic 1: Clarification of Information

Information topic	Representative Comment	Service Response
Anishinaabek did not use teepees	If we keep it the way it is, it should be noted that they are not Wigwams. The Anishnaabek did not use teepees	Recommendations provided in these comments have been incorporated into the final EA.

Topic 2. Alternatives to preserve unique architectural features

Concern Statement	Representative Comment	Service Response
Alt A but with minor improvements for wildlife viewing	Renovate existing structure and install windows to brighten and add more views	This alternative is similar to Alternative A and Alternative C affects and within the scope of the Assessment. This approach would fail to meet the project purposes to significantly improve visitor use and experience, and reduce unauthorized uses inside the enclosed portions of the shelter. Although removing the portions of the shelter that are representative of teepees was not a concern for local Tribal Nations, Service Tribal liaisons suggest it would be damaging to the Service's relationships and employees within the region and across the country where we work with Tribes whose cultures do include teepees.
Retain some echo of historical conical roof	Retain cone tops, but no walls at the base (conceptual image provided)	The effects of this change would be similar to Alt. B and to a lesser degree, Alt C and within the scope of this Assessment. This alternative would be within the scope of Alt. B design options which aim to keep as much history as possible including the understanding that teepees are not a part of the history of the area pre-European settlement. Mitigation for the adverse effects would include interpretive panels and recordation of the layout, materials and photos of the existing structure to preserve historical information. Final architectural design of the preferred alternative will take into consideration the environmental assessment criteria, construction feasibility, costs, maintenance and material availability to determine the final design.
Alt B & C compromise to maintain rustic feel & historic significance with more wildlife viewing	Open pool-side of each conical structure in a wide doorway concept for more viewing opportunities	The effects of this change would be similar to Alt A and Alt C and within the scope of this EA and alternative C. This approach would fail to meet the purposes to significantly improve visitor use and experience, reduce unauthorized uses inside the enclosed conical portions of the shelter. Although not a concern for local Tribal Nations to keep the portions of the shelter that were originally constructed to represent teepees, Service Tribal liaisons suggest it would be damaging to the Service's relationships and employees within the region and across the country where we work with Tribes whose culture includes teepees.

Topic 3. Question Adequacy of Evaluation

Concern Statement	Representative Comment	Service Response
Alt C would result in altering character-defining features, including the conical roofs	We are working with the State Historic Preservation Office on the cultural resource impact analyses for Alternative C.	Previous evaluations of the historic eligibility of the structure as part of a “Historic District” evaluation had identified the shelter as eligible for its integrity of location, workmanship, setting, feeling and association. The design of the shelter was not indicated as a determining aspect for its eligibility. However, the Service recognizes alterations would result in physical destruction of part of the Shelter. This alternative would require the Service to mitigate as appropriate and establish a Memorandum of Agreement. Alternative C affected environment has been updated in the final Assessment to provide this clarification.

Topic 4. NEPA Purpose and Need

Concern Statement	Representative Comment	Service Response
Agency interest in preservation	Concern was expressed about proposing changes rather than preserving history	Through this action, the Service recognized that there has been damage to the existing structure and identified the need to develop a plan for structural improvements to the existing structure, rather than demolition of the structure in order to maintain its intrinsic historical heritage. The purpose of this action is also to improve wildlife observation, visitor experience, reduce unauthorized use inside the shelter and consider the cultural appropriateness of some elements of the original design. Through completing the Environmental Assessment, the Service will comply with the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 standards for the preservation of history on federal lands. No changes were made to the Assessment as a result of these comments.

Appendix E – Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)