

Draft Compatibility Determination

Title

Draft Compatibility Determination for Urban Women's Fishing Clinic, Bayou Sauvage Urban National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Use Category

Fishing

Refuge Use Type(s)

Fishing Special Event

Refuge

Bayou Sauvage Urban National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Purpose(s) and Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies)

Bayou Sauvage NWR, located in the City of New Orleans in Orleans Parish, Louisiana, is managed as part of the Bayou Sauvage Urban National Wildlife Refuges Complex. It was established in April 1990 pursuant to the Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986, 16 USC §3901(b) (Public Law 99-645, Title V, Section 502). The primary purposes of the refuge, as defined by the following authorities, are to:

Emergency Wetlands Resources Act of 1986, 16 U.S.C. 3901 (b)

- Enhance the populations of migratory, shore, and wading birds within the refuge.
- Encourage natural diversity of fish and wildlife species within the refuge.
- Protect the threatened and endangered species and otherwise provide for the conservation and management of fish and wildlife within the refuge.
- Fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States respecting fish and wildlife.
- Protect the archaeological resources of the refuge.
- Provide opportunities for fish and wildlife-dependent public uses and recreation in an urban setting.

North American Wetlands Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 4401 2(b)

- Protect, enhance, restore, and manage an appropriate distribution and

diversity of wetland ecosystems and other habitats for migratory birds and other fish and wildlife in North America.

- Maintain current or improved distributions of migratory bird populations.
- Sustain an abundance of waterfowl and other migratory birds consistent with the goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and the international obligations contained in the migratory bird treaties and conventions and other agreements with Canada, Mexico, and other countries.

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System, otherwise known as Refuge System, is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management, and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife, and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans (Pub. L. 105-57; 111 Stat. 1252).

Description of Use

Is this an existing use?

No

What is the use?

Fishing special events are defined as educational or other special fishing events, including clinics and excluding tournament fishing. This use would be a one-time event on September 27th, 2024, at a single location on the refuge.

Is the use a priority public use?

Yes

Where would the use be conducted?

The event location is a pond in the western portion of the refuge, approximately 0.65 miles west of Recovery Rd and 0.15 miles north of Chef Menteur Hwy in New Orleans, LA. Only existing roads, trails, or paths would be used to access the pond. The area around the pond is mostly dirt, grass, and gravel.

When would the use be conducted?

This use would be a one-time event on September 24th, 2024, during the refuge's normal operating hours.

How would the use be conducted?

The event sponsor would conduct the event and be required to adhere to any stipulations listed in the SUP. The event sponsor would be required to submit a detailed SUP for consideration. The SUP application may include the event's hours, the expected number of attendees, plans to ensure visitor safety and remove refuse off-site, alternative plans in the case of inclement weather, parking and traffic plans, a detailed description of any event items (e.g., tents, chairs, tables, etc.), and any other information requested by the refuge. The event sponsor would be responsible for bringing any event items, including non-lead fishing gear, for all attendees and removing all refuse after the event. The fishing event would be a catch-and-release event and would only allow non-lead tackle. There are no target species; however, species commonly found in the pond include largemouth bass and other sunfish species, such as crappie, bluegill sunfish, and redear sunfish. Participants would not be charged, nor would the event sponsor be charged a permit fee. The refuge estimates there would be 75 to 100 attendees. A law enforcement officer would remain at the site throughout the event.

Why is this use being proposed or reevaluated?

Special events organized by partners help the refuge inspire stewardship through quality interpretation, education, and recreation experiences. These special events allow the public to build a connection to the refuge through personal outdoor experiences that engage the senses and foster appreciation of the outdoors. It also engages the public and helps garner support for the Refuge System. Sponsored events may also help expand the refuge's capacity to achieve goals and raise public awareness regarding the refuge's resources. Special events coordinated by others also builds and strengthens partnerships. As an Urban National Wildlife Refuge, one of the goals of the refuge is to connect with urban community members and offer opportunities to spend time in the outdoors.

Availability of Resources

The costs associated with this event would be approximately 24 hours of staff time to review the special use permit, identify stipulations, coordinate with the event sponsor, and monitor the event. A GS-12 refuge manager would perform these duties, costing approximately \$1248.24. All other costs associated with the event would be the responsibility of the sponsor. As such, the refuge's operating budget accounts for staff time to administer special events and is adequate to administer this event.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use

Potential impacts of a proposed use on the refuge's purpose(s) and the Refuge System mission

Fishing Special Events directly support the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the purpose of the refuge, specifically, "Provide opportunities for fish and wildlife-dependent public uses and recreation in an urban setting."

The goals and objectives listed in the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (USFWS 2009a, b) that the proposed action would support include:

- Goal 3: Provide public use opportunities consistent with the Refuge System mission that capitalize on the unique urban proximity of Bayou Sauvage NWR.
 - Objective 3.5: Objective 3.5: Where possible, over the 15-year life of the CCP, provide and improve fishing opportunities on the refuge.

Wildlife-dependent recreation, including fishing events, introduce visitors to the refuge and its resources and fosters environmental stewardship values. For example, nature-based activities can increase visitors' connectedness to nature (Rosa et al. 2019), inspiring participation in environmentally responsible behaviors (Lee and Jan 2015). Such connectedness and environmental awareness increase the public's support for the refuge, its resources, the Refuge System, and the Refuge System mission.

The impacts of this use, whether adverse or beneficial, are those that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship with the uses. Resources that would not be more than negligibly impacted by the proposed action have been dismissed from further analysis. The refuge manager may modify or eliminate the uses at any time to address resource concerns, unacceptable impacts, and public safety needs or to adapt to changing conditions.

Short-term impacts

The main adverse impact associated with this use is temporary wildlife disturbance. Birds and other wildlife exhibit various behavioral and physiological responses to human disturbance and may avoid areas with high levels of human activity (Burger 1981). Physiological responses include the release of stress hormones (Müllner et al. 2004, Thiel et al. 2008) and increased heart rate (Weimerskirch et al. 2002). Behavioral responses include increased vigilance (Frid and Dill 2002), altered singing behavior (Gutzwiller et al. 1994), and flushing (Ikuta and Blumstein 2003, Beale and Monaghan 2004, Pease et al. 2005, Livezey et al. 2016). Human disturbance can also cause birds to discontinue or avoid foraging (Burger and Gochfield 1998, Thomas et al. 2003, Yasue 2005, Martín et al. 2015) and instead spend more time displaying avoidance behaviors. Further, McNeil et al. (1992) suggested that some waterfowl and shorebird species may forage at night instead of during the day to avoid humans. These physiological and behavioral responses to human activity cause birds to expend energy (Bélanger and Bédard 1990, Weimerskirch et al. 2002) that would otherwise be used for survival, migration, and reproduction. However, the event would be restricted to a single day and location. Thus, adverse impacts on wildlife are expected to be minor and temporary.

A Section 7 Threatened and Endangered (T&E) Species evaluation was conducted (USFWS 2024) to determine potential impacts to these species. Two T&E species potentially occur in the location of the event, tri-colored bats and monarch butterflies.

Tri-colored bats hibernate in caves, crevices, mines, and manmade structures, including bridges, buildings, culverts, dams, and sewers (Goehring 1954, Davis 1964, Jones and Pagels 1968, Lacki and Bookhout 1983, Fujita and Kunz 1984, Whitaker and Rissler 1992, Lance et al. 2001, Ferrara and Leberg 2005, Dixon 2011, Damm and Geluso 2008, Meierhofer et al. 2019, Newman et al. 2021, McCoshum et al. 2023). They have also been documented roosting in hardwoods (Newman et al. 2021). During the summer, roosts in southern region typically occur in dead hardwood leaves, pine needles, or Spanish moss (*Tillandsia usneoides*) (Menzel et al. 1999, Veilleux et al. 2003, Perry and Thill 2007, O'Keefe et al. 2009, Shute et al. 2021).

Because the event would only occur on one day and be restricted to one location, potential impacts on the tricolored bat would likely be negligible. The event is unlikely to significantly impact the tricolored bat's habitat, and the event would not occur during the early evening when the bats are most active. In addition, tricolored bats have not been documented in the area surrounding the event location.

The monarch's habitat requirements include healthy and abundant milkweed during the breeding season; adequate nectar resources during breeding and migration; moderate temperatures, nectar, and roosting sites that provide protection from the elements while overwintering; and connectivity (USFWS 2020). Because the event would only occur on one day and be restricted to one location, potential impacts on the monarch butterfly would likely be negligible. In addition, monarchs have not been documented in the area surrounding the event location.

In addition to wildlife, the use could impact vegetation. Refuge visitors can trample vegetation on- and off-trail. A plant's response to trampling is heavily influenced by its morphological characteristics (Pescott and Stewart 2014, Marion et al. 2016). The brittle woody stems of shrubs and small trees and rigid stems of tall forbs are susceptible to trampling, which damages buds and flowers and reduces seed production (Cole 1995, Cole and Monz 2002, Marion et al. 2016). Grasses, sedges, and low-growing herbs are more resistant due to flexible stems and underground perennating buds (Hill and Pickering 2009, Striker et al. 2011, Marion et al. 2016). Only existing roads and trails would be used to access the site, minimizing impacts. The event site is immediately adjacent to a maintained road, there would be minimal impact to wildlife habitat.

Long-term impacts

Recreationists can also be vectors for invasive plants. Seeds or other propagules can be transferred from one area to another via clothing or personal belongings and spread to nearby areas through self-propagation (Pickering and Hill 2007). Once established, invasive plants can out-compete native plants, altering habitats and indirectly impacting wildlife. Visitors would be restricted to a single location, limiting the potential spread of invasive species from site-to-site.

Long-term impacts to species are measured on a population level. Because this event is a single day, single instance, and catch and release, no impacts to fish or wildlife populations are anticipated.

The event would be restricted to a single day at a single location. As such, additional long-term effects are not expected.

Public Review and Comment

The draft compatibility determination will be available for public review and comment for 14 calendar days, from July 16, 2024 to July 29, 2024. The public will be made aware of this comment opportunity through postings at the New Orleans Public Library (219 Loyola Ave, New Orleans LA 70112), East Orleans Regional Library (5641 Read Blvd, New Orleans, LA 70127), and letters to potentially

interested people, such as the state of Louisiana and local tribes. The document will be made available electronically on the refuge website <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/bayou-sauvage-urban>. Please let us know if you need the documents in an alternative format. Concerns expressed during the public comment period will be addressed in the final document.

Determination

Is the use compatible?

Yes

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility

- Events must include a Service and/or refuge message that helps further the understanding of the purposes of the refuge and the mission of the Refuge System.
- SUP request may be required to include (but is not limited to):
 - Description of proposed activities and educational goals
 - Date, time, and preferred location(s)
 - Time required to set up and breakdown event
 - Parking and traffic plans
 - Number of anticipated participants
 - Safety considerations
 - Inclement weather plans
 - Proposed event/participant evaluation strategy
- All participants must use established trails and roads
- The event sponsor must supply any tables, chairs, or tents, etc. (and is responsible for the set up and breakdown of such items in locations identified by Refuge staff)
- The event sponsor must ensure all refuse is removed from the site
- Catch-and-release would be required
- Non-lead tackle would be required
- The event sponsor would be required to repair any damage that occurs and restore the site to its pre-event state

Justification

The stipulations outlined above would help ensure the use is compatible at Bayou Sauvage Urban National Wildlife Refuge. The use, as outlined in this compatibility determination, would not conflict with the national policy to maintain the biological diversity, integrity, and environmental health of the refuge. Based on available science and best professional judgement, the Service has determined the use, in accordance with the stipulations provided here, would not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purpose of the refuge. Instead, the use would allow visitors to connect with the refuge and its resources.

Draft

Signature of Determination

Refuge Manager Signature and Date

Signature of Concurrence

Assistant Regional Director Signature and Date

Mandatory Reevaluation Date

2034

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