



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge

Hunting and Fishing Plan



Credit: Matt Frackleton

July 2020

Appendix A. Compatibility Determinations

Appendix B. Environmental Assessment

Appendix C Intra-Service Section 7 Evaluation

Appendix D. Summary of Public Comments

Appendix E. Finding of No Significant Impact

Estimated Lead Agency Total Costs
Associated with Developing and
Producing the EA (per ERM 10-12):
\$12,533

**Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
Hunting and Fishing Plan**

July 2020

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
U.S. Route 20 East
Seneca Falls, NY, 13148**

Submitted By:
Refuge Manager

Signature

Date

Concurrence:
Refuge Supervisor

Signature

Date

Approved:
Regional Chief,
National Wildlife Refuge System

Signature

Date

**Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
Hunting and Fishing Plan – July 2020**

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I. Introduction

National wildlife refuges (NWRs) are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System); the purposes of the individual refuge; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) policy; National and state laws; and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSA) of 1966, as amended by the Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997; the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962; and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations and Service Manual.

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (NWR, refuge) was established by Executive Order 7971 on September 12, 1938, "...as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife..." Since then, the refuge has acquired lands under the authority of the Migratory Bird Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 715-715r), as amended, "...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds."

In February 2013, the Service approved a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Hunting Environmental Assessment for Montezuma NWR. The CCP provided strategic management for the refuge for 15 years, addressing a wide range of refuge activities including everything from habitat management, to facilities (maintenance and new construction), to public uses. A Hunting Plan was part of this overall management plan for the refuge.

The mission of the Refuge System, as outlined by the Refuge System Administration Act, as amended by the 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."

The Refuge System Improvement Act mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the Refuge System to (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4):

- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the Refuge System;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the Refuge System are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the Refuge System described at 16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(2) and the purposes of each refuge are carried out;
- Ensure 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 Refuge System are located;

- Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the Refuge System and the purposes of each refuge;
- Recognize compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the Refuge System through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- Ensure that opportunities are provided within the Refuge System for compatible wildlife- dependent recreational uses; and
- Monitor the status and trends of fish, wildlife, and plants in each refuge.

Therefore, it is a priority of the Service to provide for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, including hunting and fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established and the mission of the Refuge System.

Montezuma NWR lies at the north end of Cayuga Lake in the heart of the Finger Lakes region of central New York State (NYS, State) and currently includes over 10,000 acres (Figure 1). The refuge manages 16 impoundments that provide more than 4,000 acres of freshwater wetland habitat to more than 1,000,000 waterfowl, as well as a diversity of shore, wading, and songbirds each year. A diversity of marsh and wading birds breed here, including bitterns, rails, black terns, and grebes, and several pairs of bald eagles.

Montezuma NWR is part of a larger 50,000-acre Montezuma Wetlands Complex (MWC) that encompasses public and private lands. The New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC) also manages more than 8,000 acres of public lands for wildlife and public use in the MWC. Audubon New York maintains an education center in the MWC and has highlighted the area as a globally significant Important Bird Area due to its value for migratory birds, breeding marsh birds, and other species. Those other species include Federal trust species, such as shorebirds and neotropical migrant songbirds (passerines). The MWC also supports the second largest population of cerulean warblers in New York - a species of high conservation concern that breeds in riparian, forested wetlands, a habitat that was drained or cleared in many other areas.

The Service proposes to expand hunting opportunities for waterfowl, wild turkey and small game (eastern cottontail rabbit and gray squirrel) at Montezuma NWR to better align with State programs. We propose the following changes to the existing hunting and fishing plans:

1. Species changes: Gallinule hunting would be opened during the regular waterfowl hunting season; small game (eastern cottontail rabbit and gray squirrel) hunting would be opened.
2. Hunting area changes: New units would be opened for hunting snow goose during NYDEC snow goose seasons and for waterfowl during the NYS

regular waterfowl season.

3. Regulations: Limits on the number of shells permitted into the waterfowl hunting areas would be removed; limits to the number of daily permits available for deer hunting would be removed; dogs would be allowed for hunting fall turkey and eastern cottontail rabbit; the use of lead fishing tackle (sinkers and jigs) would be prohibited; hunters may use only approved non-toxic shot for hunting of all small/upland game species (i.e., rabbit and squirrel).
4. Seasonal changes: Expansion of turkey hunting to include the State spring season.
5. Fishing: Expansion of fishing access from the refuge to adjacent State waters.

II. Statement of Objectives

Changes proposed within this hunting and fishing plan are aimed at helping the refuge achieve its desired objectives described herein, and to provide high-quality hunting and fishing opportunities that address the needs of these wildlife-dependent public uses.

Through the CCP process, we identified six overall goals for management of the refuge, including one specifically for hunting and fishing:

Goal 5: Provide opportunities for hunters and anglers to enjoy and support hunting and fishing on the refuge and increase their understanding of the regional environmental importance of the refuge and of the greater MWC.

Hunting and fishing on the refuge will be conducted within the framework of applicable Federal and State laws and regulations, as well as refuge regulations to ensure safety, practice sound management, comply with legal mandates, ensure compatibility with the purposes for which the refuge was established, and provide a quality hunting experience.

- **Fishing**
Provide opportunities for fishing on the refuge in a manner that minimizes conflicts between fishing and biological resources, particularly nesting birds, and provide participants with reasonable harvest opportunities, uncrowded conditions, and minimal conflict with other users.
- **Deer Hunting**
Permit access for hunting of white-tailed deer in accordance with NYS regulations and consistent with sound biological principles to provide participants with reasonable harvest opportunities, safe and uncrowded conditions, and minimal conflicts with other users.

- **Waterfowl Hunting**
Allow access for hunting of waterfowl (including Canada goose, snow goose and gallinule) in accordance with NYS regulations and consistent with sound biological principles to provide participants with reasonable harvest opportunities, safe and uncrowded conditions, and minimal user conflicts.
- **Wild Turkey Hunting**
Allow access for hunting of wild turkey during the fall, youth and spring hunt seasons in accordance with NYS regulations and consistent with sound biological principles to provide participants with reasonable harvest opportunities, safe and uncrowded conditions, and minimal conflicts with other users.
- **Small Game Hunting (cottontail rabbit and gray squirrel)**
Allow access for hunting of cottontail rabbit and gray squirrel in accordance with NYS regulations and consistent with sound biological principles to provide participants with reasonable harvest opportunities, uncrowded conditions, and minimal conflicts with other users.

III. Description of Hunting and Fishing Program

A. Areas to be Opened or Changed to Hunting and Fishing

Waterfowl hunting (including Canada and snow geese) is currently open during the NYDEC regular season at Tschache Pool, Sandhill Crane Unit, Hidden Marsh and Kipp Island; Unit 17 would be added as a waterfowl hunting area; all of these areas would also be opened to gallinule (Figure 4 - Waterfowl and Goose). Canada geese are hunted on grassland units (Waugh, Furman North, Furman South) during the September season, and snow geese can be hunted on the refuge within State snow goose seasons (Knox-Marsellus, Puddler, Furman North, Furman South). Hunting would also be permitted in Stowell for snow goose.

Fall and youth turkey hunting are allowed on the refuge, except along the Wildlife Drive and at the headquarters area. Fall turkey hunting is not permitted in the Esker Brook area because that area is not open to hunting until November 1. Youth turkey hunting is prohibited in the Esker Brook and headquarters areas, and in refuge impoundments and adjacent buffer zones. A spring turkey season would be added, excluding the Esker Brook and headquarters areas and in refuge impoundments and adjacent buffer zones (Figure 5 - Turkey).

White-tailed deer hunting is permitted on the refuge; the Esker Brook area is closed to hunting until November 1, and the Wildlife Drive area is closed to hunting, including parking and walking for hunting purposes, until December 1 (Figure 3 - White-tailed deer and small game).

Small game, including rabbit and squirrel, hunting would be permitted on the refuge and follows NYSDEC regulations except hunters would be required to use nontoxic shot.

The Esker Brook area would be closed to hunting until November 1, and the Wildlife Drive would be closed to hunting until December 1; small game hunting in these areas would close at the end of the white-tailed deer hunting season. The headquarters area would be opened to small game hunting during the white-tailed deer late bow hunting season only. Small game hunting would be prohibited in refuge impoundments and adjacent buffer zones (Figure 3 - White-tailed deer and small game).

Fishing access for recreational fishing would be permitted at specific areas on the refuge designated as public fishing sites. These sites would include the following (Figure 2 - Fishing):

- May's Point Fishing Access Site at the end of South May's Point Road, with access to the Erie Canal;
- Along the banks of the Seneca Trail with fishing access to the Seneca River; and
- Along the banks of the Oxbow Trail, with access to both the Clyde and Seneca Rivers.

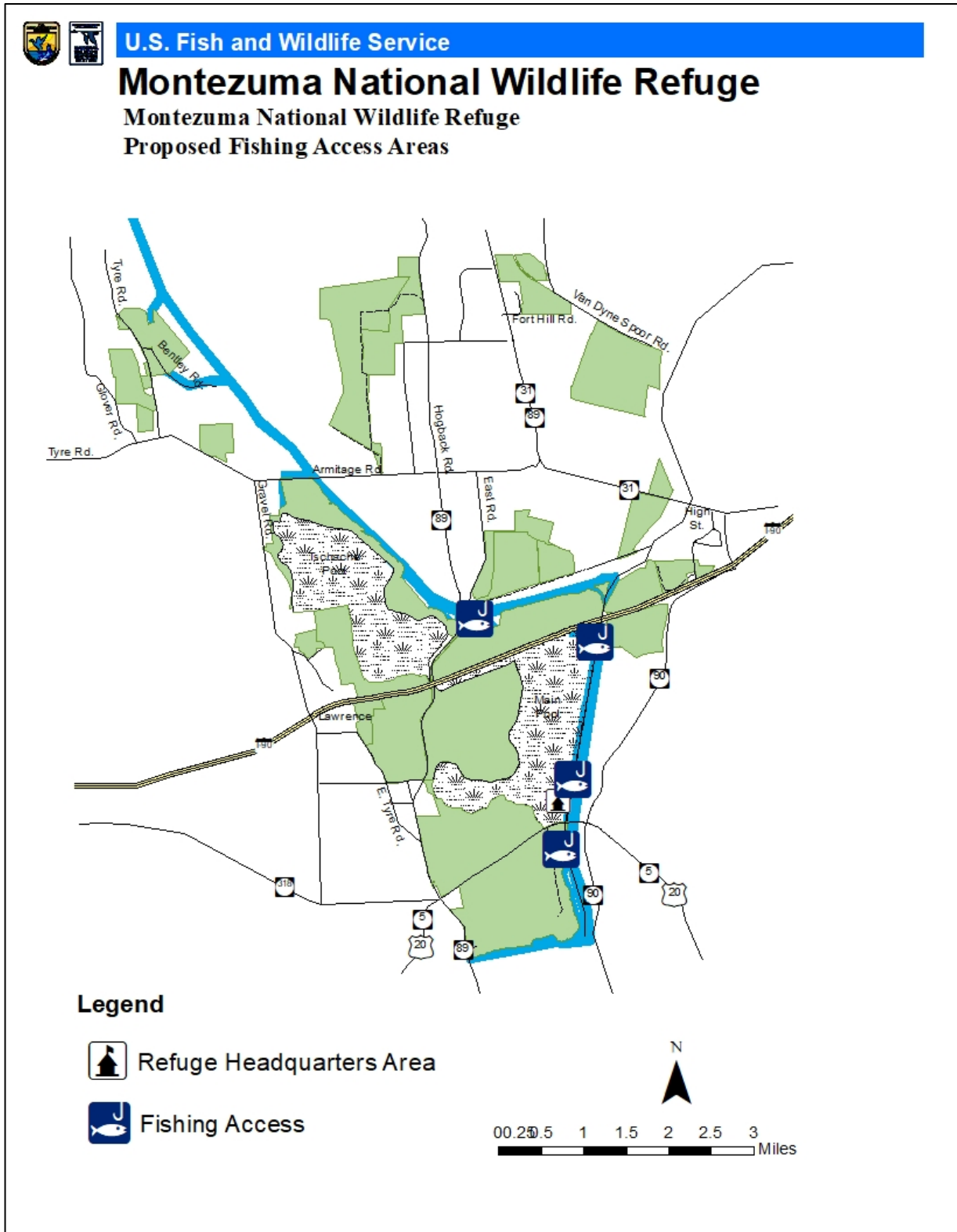


Figure 2 - Fishing

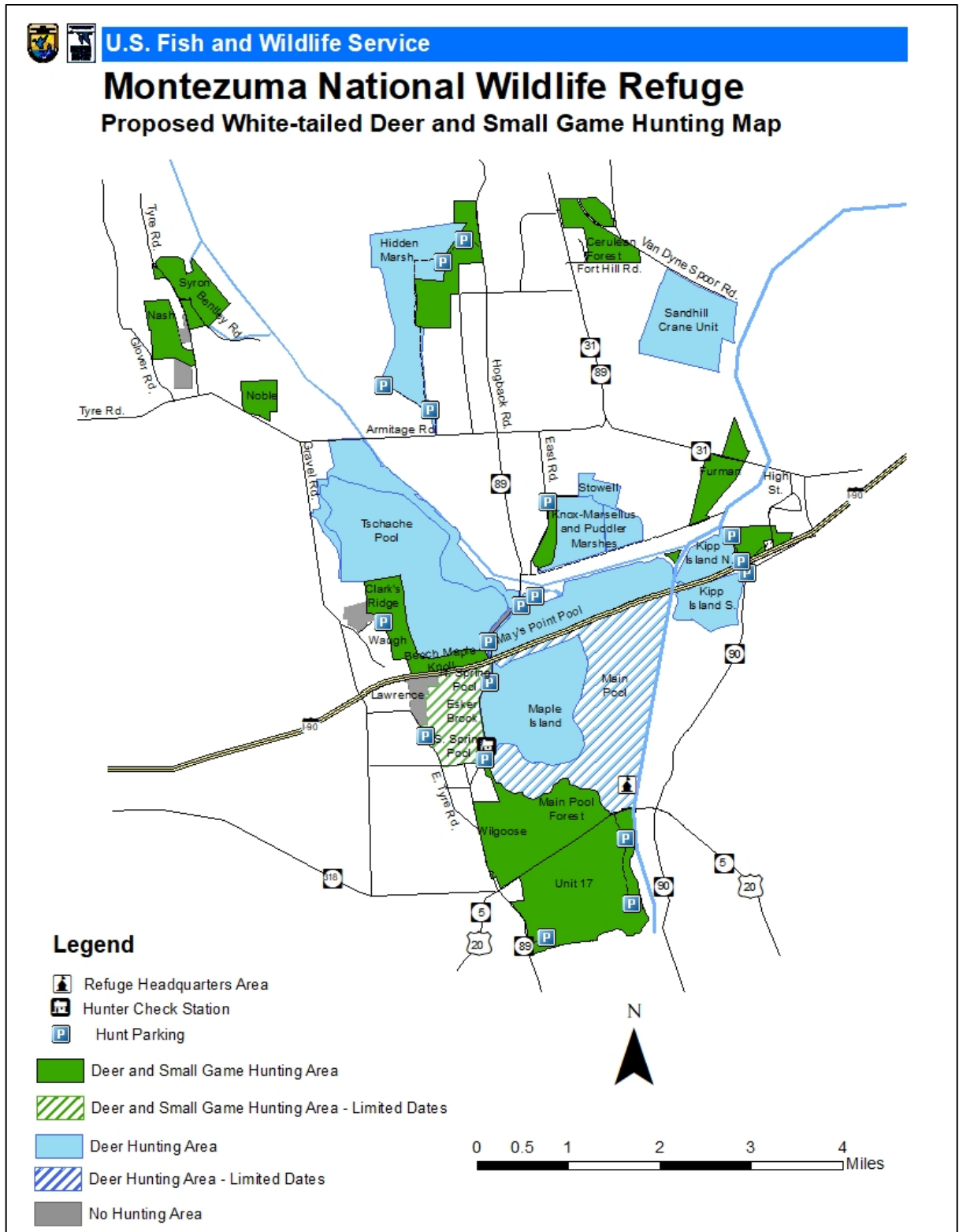


Figure 3 - White-tailed deer and small game

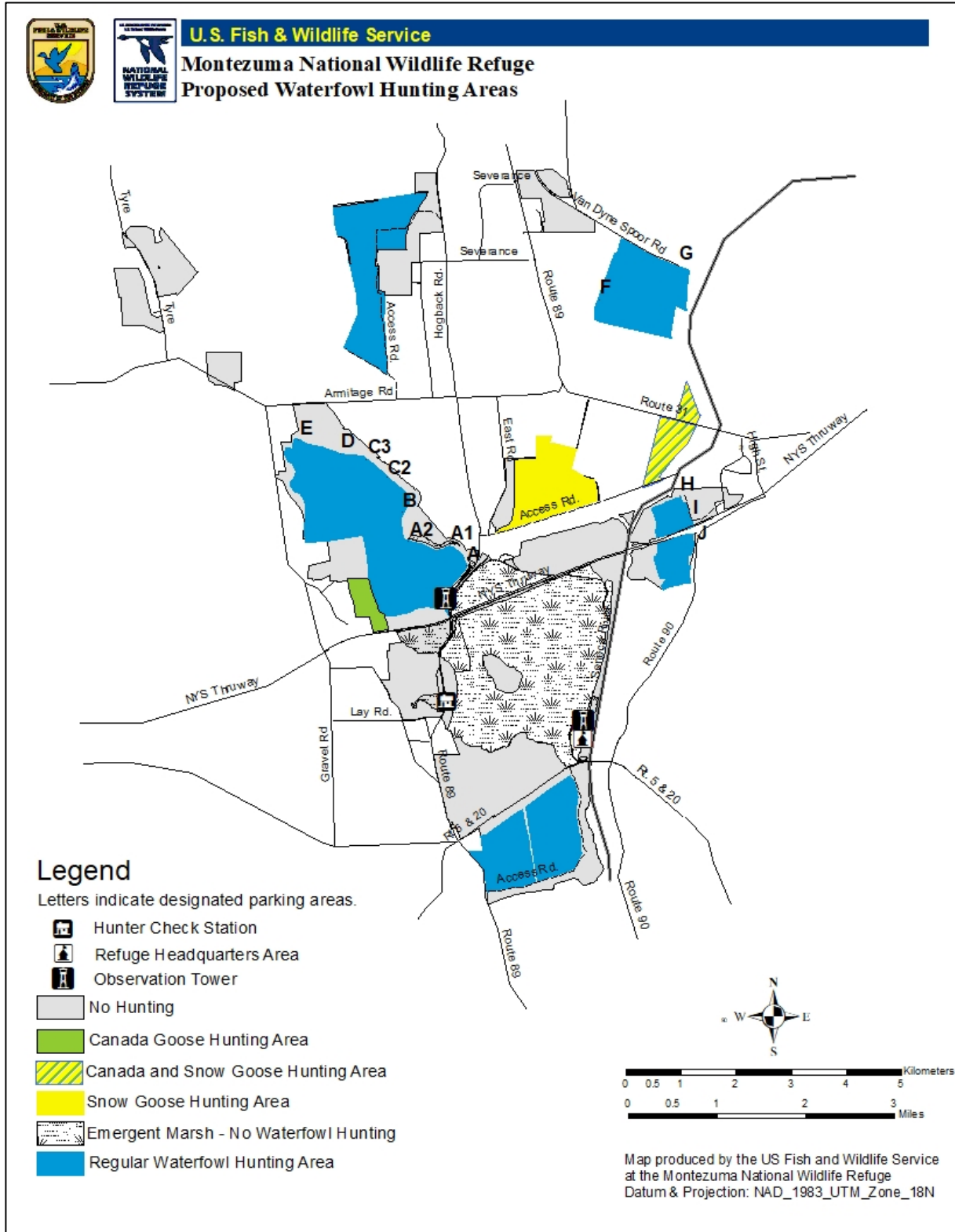


Figure 4 - Waterfowl and Goose

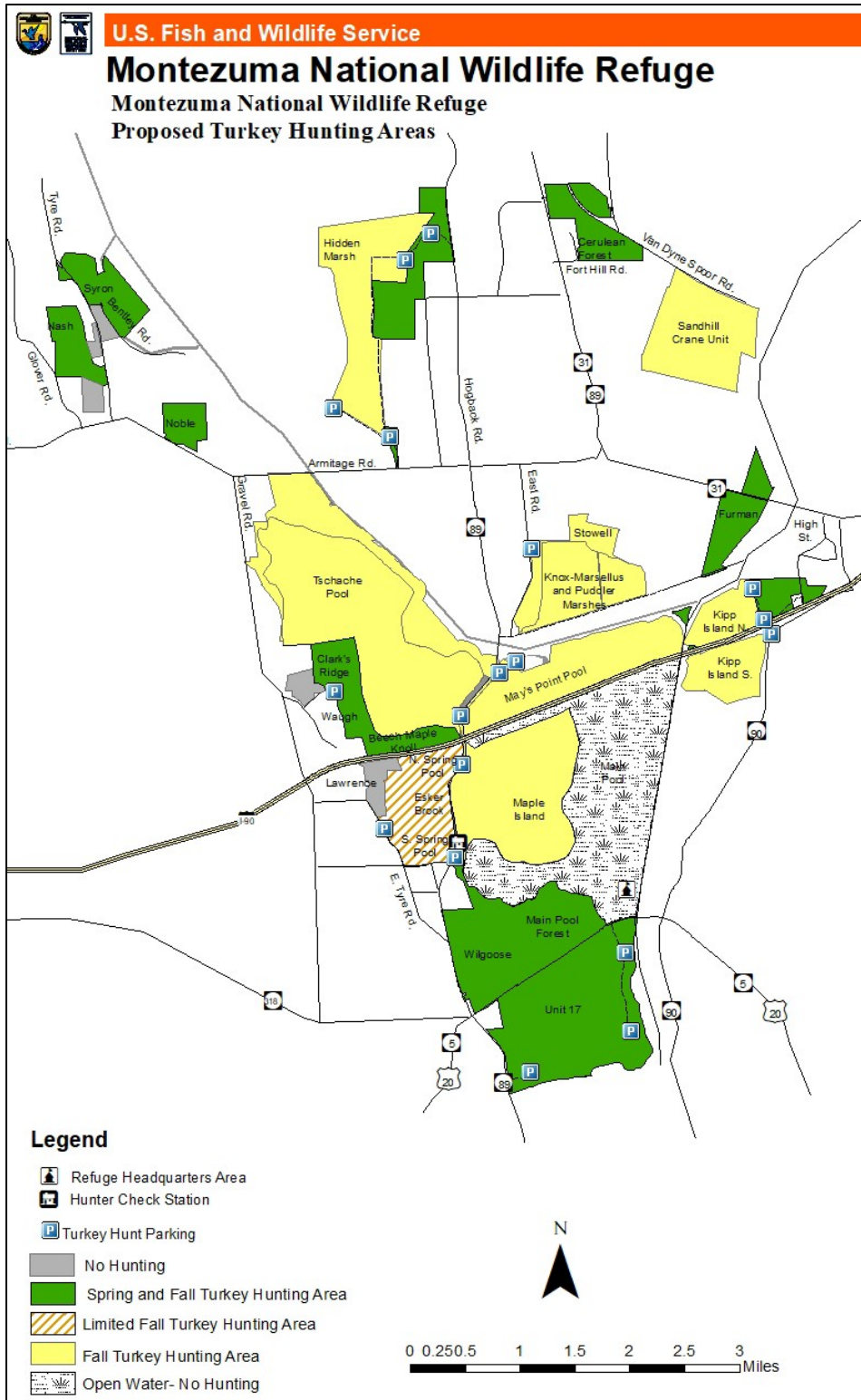


Figure 5 - Turkey

B. Species to be Taken, Hunting Periods, Hunting Access

White Tailed Deer – White-tailed deer hunting is permitted on the refuge; the Esker Brook area is closed to hunting until November 1, and the Wildlife Drive area is closed to hunting, including parking and walking for hunting purposes, until December 1. The headquarters area is open during the State late bow hunting season only. Deer hunting would be conducted within the NYS hunting seasons for the Southern Zone.

Wild Turkey – Fall and youth turkey hunting are permitted on the refuge except along the Wildlife Drive and at the headquarters area. Fall turkey hunting is not permitted in the Esker Brook area because hunting is not open in that area until November 1. Youth turkey hunting is prohibited in the Esker Brook and headquarters areas and in refuge impoundments and adjacent buffer zones. Spring turkey hunting would be permitted, excluding the Esker Brook and headquarters areas and in refuge impoundments and adjacent buffer zones. Turkey hunting would be conducted within the NYS hunting seasons for the Southern Zone.

Migratory Bird – Migratory bird hunting is permitted on the refuge for waterfowl. Gallinule would be added. Waterfowl hunting access is by boat or foot, following a “free-roam” system on the pool; hunters must launch their non-motorized boats or walk from designated parking areas within the hunt units during the regular season. Goose hunting is permitted during the NYDEC seasons for Canada and snow geese. Both species are hunted on regular waterfowl hunting areas during the NYDEC waterfowl season. Canada geese are hunted on grassland units during the September season (Waugh, Furman North, Furman South), and snow geese can be hunted on the refuge within the State snow goose seasons (Knox-Marsellus, Puddler, Furman North, Furman South). Stowell would be added for snow goose seasons. Migratory bird hunting would be conducted within the NYS hunting seasons for the Western Zone.

Upland Game – Upland game hunting would be permitted on the refuge for rabbit and squirrel. The Esker Brook area would be closed to hunting until November 1, and the Wildlife Drive would be closed to hunting until December 1; small game hunting in these areas would close at the end of the white-tailed deer hunting season. The headquarters area would be opened to small game hunting during the white-tailed deer late bow hunting season only. Small game hunting would be prohibited in refuge impoundments and adjacent buffer zones. Upland game hunting would be conducted within the NYS hunting seasons for the Southern Zone.

Sport Fishing – Fishing would be allowed during NYS open fishing seasons in accordance with Federal regulations and State freshwater fishing guidelines. Visitor access hours on the refuge are from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.

C. Hunter and Angler Permit Requirements

Participants must have a valid New York hunting license and follow New York laws and NYSDEC regulations including discharge, possession limits, manner of taking, tagging, and reporting. For big game (white-tailed deer and turkey) and migratory bird hunting, we require hunters to possess a valid daily hunt permit card, and appropriate Service form (FWS Form 3-2439 - Hunt Application - National Wildlife Refuge System, and FWS Form 3-2361 - Migratory Bird Hunt Report) respectively. We require hunters to complete and return the daily hunt permit card by the end of the hunt day. For the regular waterfowl season, we require reservations, proof of successful completion of the NYS waterfowl identification course, the Montezuma nonresident waterfowl identification course, or a suitable nonresident State waterfowl identification course. All hunters must show proof of successful course completion each time they hunt, in addition to showing their valid State-issued hunting license and signed Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Federal Duck Stamp). For small game (eastern cottontail rabbit and gray squirrel), we require hunters to possess a valid daily hunt permit card (Upland/Small Game/Furbearer Report, FWS Form 3-2362) and return the daily hunt permit card by the end of the hunt day.

No refuge-specific permit for fishing is required, although all anglers must have in their possession a valid NYS fishing license.

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

National wildlife refuges, including Montezuma NWR, conduct hunting and fishing programs within the framework of state and Federal regulations. The refuge has moved forward with developing this hunting and fishing plan based on previously approved hunt plans and discussions with the NYDEC.

E. Law Enforcement

The enforcement of refuge and State hunting and fishing regulations, trespass, and other public use violations normally associated with management of a national wildlife refuge is the responsibility of Federal wildlife officers and State conservation officers. These officers cooperate with, and are assisted by, State and local police officers as well.

During the hunting and fishing seasons, the refuge will be patrolled by law enforcement officers. Regulations and maps will be posted on the refuge website (<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/montezuma/>) and at the refuge headquarters/visitor center. Boundaries of the refuge are clearly marked by refuge boundary signs.

F. Funding and Staffing Requirements

There are costs involved in offering these wildlife-dependent, priority public uses. Most of the costs are associated with preparing for, and administering, hunting areas. Staff costs are associated with administration (i.e., monitoring check stations, printing and processing applications and issuing permits), law enforcement, signage, maintaining infrastructure such

as parking areas, roads, gates, and habitat management. The refuge has adequate funds to administer the hunting and fishing programs. The following breakdown shows the estimated amount of funds needed to administer the program.

Table 1. Staff Hours and Program Costs

Item	Staff Hours	Hunt/Fish Costs
Planning	120	\$ 4,800
Check-in/Check Station	100	\$ 4,000
Public Information	40	\$ 1,600
Supplies	10	\$ 900
Data Collection	10	\$ 400
Maintenance Facilities	10	\$ 400
Maintenance Vehicle	5	\$ 400
Utilities	--	\$ 900
Totals	295	\$13,400

IV. Conduct of the Hunting and Fishing Program

To ensure compatibility with refuge purposes and mission of the Refuge System, hunting and fishing is conducted in accordance with state and Federal regulations, and supplemented by refuge-specific regulations. However, the refuge manager may, upon annual review of the hunting and fishing program, impose further restrictions on hunting or fishing, recommend the refuge be closed to hunting or fishing, or further liberalize hunting and fishing regulations up to the limit of state regulations. The refuge would restrict activity if it becomes inconsistent with other, higher priority refuge programs or endangers refuge resources or public safety.

A. Hunter Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures

Since hunting was first opened at Montezuma NWR, the refuge has managed the hunt program through a hunt permit system administered at a hunter check station. The check station provides many benefits to the hunt program. Close contact with hunters has allowed the refuge to collect biological information (e.g., gathering of harvest data and the collection of samples for disease monitoring, such as avian influenza) in recent years. In addition, the permit system helps provide for interactive feedback, as well as outreach opportunities, so hunters are more aware of applicable regulations, thereby minimizing unintentional violations. Personal contact with hunters also facilitates social support per the R3 Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model. For all refuge hunts, we will accommodate State special hunts in addition to youth (for example, but not limited to, veterans).

We will allow access for hunting of white-tailed deer during the NYDEC white-tailed deer hunt seasons in accordance with NYS regulations and consistent with sound biological principles to provide participants with reasonable harvest opportunities, safe and uncrowded conditions, and minimal conflicts with other users. Service policy states that, where practicable, hunt regulations should be consistent with state regulations. Daily permits will be required.

We will allow access for hunting of waterfowl and gallinule during the NYDEC regular waterfowl hunt season, as well as Canada and snow geese during the state seasons in accordance with NYS regulations and consistent with sound biological principles to provide participants with reasonable harvest opportunities, safe and uncrowded conditions, and minimal conflicts with other users. Daily permits will be required and reservations will be required within the regular waterfowl hunt season.

We will allow access for hunting of wild turkey during the fall, youth and spring hunt seasons in accordance with NYS regulations and consistent with sound biological principles to provide participants with reasonable harvest opportunities, safe and uncrowded conditions, and minimal conflicts with other users. Service policy states that, where practicable, hunt regulations should be consistent with state regulations. The NYDEC is in favor of providing opportunities for turkey hunting on the refuge. Although turkeys are not abundant at the refuge, there is enough land for us to open the refuge to limited turkey hunting. To provide additional hunting opportunities, a spring season will be opened. Areas will be opened to turkey hunting if they can accommodate increased access by hunters, without disturbing sensitive species or infringing on other priority public uses.

- Prior to opening the refuge to spring turkey hunting, an information meeting, web site information, handouts, and press releases would be developed to inform the public about the turkey hunt, NYDEC regulations, special refuge regulations, and hunting on refuges. Refuge turkey hunting maps and regulations would be posted on the refuge's web site and mailed or emailed upon request. All information related to hunting on the refuge would be posted at the refuge's hunter check station prior to the season's opening.
- *Youth Turkey Hunting:* During the NYDEC Youth Wild Turkey Hunt (usually in late April), young hunters will be permitted to hunt turkeys according to State regulations in designated areas of the refuge. Hunting will not be permitted in areas closed to hunting to minimize conflict related to facilities and structures, certain habitats, and select public use areas. Daily permits will be required. The number of daily permits will be set by the refuge manager each year based on available hunting area(s), maximizing hunt opportunities, providing for a quality hunt experience, public demand, minimizing disturbance to sensitive wildlife and plant species, balancing other public use demands, and the administrative workload.
- *Fall Turkey Hunting:* Fall turkey hunting will be permitted in areas open to deer hunting. The Wildlife Drive and Esker Brook area will not be open to turkey hunting because the fall turkey season usually ends in November, before the Wildlife Drive and the Esker Brook area are open to hunting. The Wildlife Drive and Esker Brook area will be open to fall turkey hunting if the State extends the turkey season into December. Daily permits will be required. There will be no reservation system. Permits will be available at the hunter check station on a first-come, first-served basis each hunt day.
- *Spring Turkey Hunting:* Spring turkey hunting would be permitted at the refuge

excluding the Esker Brook area. Daily permits will be required. The number of daily permits will be set by the refuge manager each year based on available hunting area(s), maximizing hunt opportunities, providing for a quality hunt experience, public demand, minimizing disturbance to sensitive wildlife and plant species, balancing other public use demands, and the administrative workload. Permits will be available at the hunter check station on a first-come, first-served basis each hunt day until the day's permits are all taken.

- Small game hunting would be allowed in the same areas as deer hunting. These areas are subject to closure by the refuge manager if they endanger habitat, sensitive wildlife or plant species, or safety. Daily permits will be required, and there will be no reservation system. Permits will be available at the hunter check station on a first-come, first-served basis each hunt day.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

To ensure compatibility with refuge purposes and the mission of the Refuge System, hunting must be conducted in accordance with State and Federal regulations, as supplemented by refuge-specific regulations (50 CFR Chapter 1, Subchapter C), and information sheets/brochures. Refuge-specific stipulations are also detailed in the Hunting Compatibility Determination (Appendix A). Listed below are general procedures that pertain to hunting on Montezuma NWR as of the date of this plan. These may be modified as conditions change.

Migratory game birds. We allow hunting of waterfowl and gallinule during the NYDEC regular waterfowl and special goose seasons on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with Federal and State regulations and subject to the following conditions:

For the regular waterfowl season:

1. We require daily refuge permits (Migratory Bird Hunt Report, FWS Form 3-2361) and reservations; we issue permits to hunters with a reservation for that hunt day. We require hunters to complete and return their permit by the end of the hunt day.
2. We allow hunting on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays during the established refuge season set within the State western zone season and during NYS's special waterfowl hunts.
3. All hunters with reservations and their hunting companions must check-in at the Route 89 Hunter Check Station area at least 1 hour before legal shooting time or forfeit their reservation.
4. We allow motorless boats to hunt waterfowl. We limit hunters to one boat per reservation and one motor vehicle in the hunt area per reservation.
5. We prohibit shooting from within 500 feet (152.4 m) of the Tschache Pool observation tower.
6. We require proof of successful completion of the NYS waterfowl identification

course, the Montezuma nonresident waterfowl identification course, or a suitable nonresident State waterfowl identification course. All hunters must show proof of successful course completion each time they hunt or when asked by refuge staff or law enforcement, in addition to showing their valid State-issued hunting license and signed Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Federal Duck Stamp).

7. We permit the use of dogs for hunting per NYS regulations.

For September Canada goose and snow goose hunting during snow goose seasons:

1. We allow hunting of Canada goose during the NYS September season and of snow goose during portions of the NYS snow goose season and portions of the period covered by the Light Goose Conservation Order.
2. All hunters must possess a valid daily hunt permit card (Migratory Bird Hunt Report, FWS Form 3-2361). We require hunters to complete and return the daily hunt permit card by the end of the hunt day.
3. For snow goose, we allow hunters to be on the refuge during the period that begins no earlier than 4 hours before legal sunrise. For Canada goose, we allow hunters to be on the refuge during the period that begins no earlier than 2 hours before legal sunrise.
4. We permit the use of dogs for hunting per NYS regulations.

Big game. We allow hunting of white-tailed deer and wild turkey during the NYSDEC seasons on designated areas of the refuge in accordance with Federal and State regulations and subject to the following conditions:

1. We close the Esker Brook area to hunting before November 1 each year. We close Wildlife Drive to hunting before December 1 each year. We open the refuge headquarters area during NYS's late archery season only. These areas will remain closed to spring and youth wild turkey hunting.
2. We allow hunting during NYS's established special hunts each year.
3. All hunters must possess a valid daily Big Game Hunt permit card (FWS Form 3-2359, Big Game Harvest Report). We require hunters to complete and return the daily hunt permit card by the end of the hunt day.
4. We allow hunters to be on the refuge during the period that begins 2 hours before legal sunrise and ends 2 hours after legal sunset.
5. An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant hunting platform is available to hunters with a disabled hunting license or America the Beautiful Access pass (prior notice needed; first come/first served).

6. We permit the use of tree stands; stands must be removed at the end of each hunt day per NYS Wildlife Management Area regulations.
7. We allow the use of dogs for hunting wild turkey during the fall season.

Small game hunting. We allow hunting for gray squirrel and eastern cottontail rabbit on designated areas of the refuge according to NYS regulations and subject to the following conditions:

1. All hunters must carry a valid daily hunt permit card (Upland/Small Game/Furbearer Report, FWS Form 3-2362) and are required to complete and return the daily hunt permit card by the end of each hunt day.
2. The Esker Brook area is only open to hunting from November 1 until the end of NYS's late bow hunting season; the Wildlife Drive is closed to hunting (including walking or parking on for the purposes of hunting) except from December 1 through the NYS late bow hunting season. We open the Headquarters area during NYS's late bow hunting season only.
3. We allow hunters to be on the refuge during the period that begins 2 hours before legal sunrise and ends 2 hours after legal sunset.
4. An ADA-compliant hunting platform is available to hunters with a disabled hunting license or America the Beautiful Access Pass (prior notice needed; first come/first served).
5. We allow the use of dogs per NYS regulations.
6. Hunters may use only approved non-toxic shot for hunting of all small game species.

C. Refuge-Specific Fishing Regulations

We allow access to NYS regulated waters for recreational fishing in accordance with Federal and State regulations and subject to the following conditions:

1. Neither fishing nor the use of motorized or non-motorized boats for fishing are allowed on refuge impoundments.
2. Anglers are permitted on the refuge for the purpose of fishing no earlier than 30 minutes before sunrise and no later than 30 minutes after sunset.
3. The use of lead fishing tackle (sinkers and jigs) is prohibited. Anglers may use non-lead alternatives such as tin, steel, or ceramic sinkers.

D. Relevant State Regulations

Hunters and anglers are responsible for knowing and complying with all New York regulations. Although refuge-owned waters are not open to fishing, the adjacent canal system offers opportunities for anglers. The refuge does not allow fishing in the

impoundments to minimize disturbance to sensitive species. We provide fishing access to the canal waters, which are State-owned, navigable waters. NYS fishing regulations apply.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting and Fishing Program

We released the draft plan and environmental assessment for public review and comment from March 19 through May 8, 2020, a total of 50 days. We distributed a press release to news organizations, the plan was available on the refuge website, and a notice was shared on Facebook with a link to the plan. No public meetings were held due to bans on public gatherings due to COVID-19.

To inform the public of the hunting fishing program and future updates, a news release will be submitted to media outlets in the area around the refuge. Notices will be posted at the refuge office/visitor information center, the refuge website, and the refuge Facebook page.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunting and Fishing Program

Hunting and fishing are two of the six priority public uses required by the Refuge Improvement Act to receive enhanced consideration on refuges. These are popular and traditional activities in the area. Hunting and fishing provide means to increase public participation on the refuge and hunting serves as a management tool to help maintain healthy, sustainable wildlife populations. Hunting on public lands has become more popular as private lands have become less available for hunting. We are supported by many people who are eager to continue with these long-standing conservation traditions. A total of 47 individuals or entities offered comments to the refuge on the draft plan. Appendix D of the Hunting and Fishing Plan summarizes the substantive comments received on the proposal, and the Service responses.

C. How Hunter and Anglers Will Be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations

Hunting and fishing information sheets and maps are updated annually and made available to hunters and anglers via the refuge website and at the visitor center, headquarters office, and hunter check station. General information regarding hunting, fishing and other wildlife-dependent public uses can be obtained at the address below, or by calling the refuge at (315) 568-5987:

The Visitor Center, entrance to the Wildlife Drive and Seneca Trail, and the refuge's headquarters office are located at:

3395 U.S. Route 20 East
Seneca Falls, NY 13148
between Auburn and Seneca Falls, New York.

VI. Compatibility Determination

Hunting and fishing activities proposed in this plan are compatible with the purposes of the refuge. See attached Appendix A. Compatibility Determinations.

