

APPENDIX C

Compatibility Determinations

- ◆ Deer hunting
- ◆ Fishing
- ◆ Environmental education and interpretation
- ◆ Wildlife observation and photography

PRE-ACQUISITION COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Deer Hunting

Refuge Name: Accokeek Creek Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies): Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1939, Refuge Recreational Act of 1962, Endangered Species Act of 1973, and Emergency Wetland Resources Act of 1986.

Refuge Purpose(s):

- (1) for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources.
- (2) for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.
- (3) for incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, protection of natural resources, and conservation of endangered or threatened species.

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission: 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 for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

Description of Use:

Deer hunting currently occurs on the property. Most hunters are members of a hunt club that is headquartered on the property. During scoping meetings, the public expressed a strong interest in having deer hunting opportunities on the refuge. The refuge will be open to deer hunting during the third week of November. Dates may change in response to changes in State regulations or to meet refuge specific goals. Hunters will be chosen by lottery for participation in the hunt. An annual hunt plan will be written or revised to guide implementation of the hunt. Currently, approximately 30-50 deer are taken on the property each year. The refuge objective will be to maintain that level of harvest and the number of hunters will be adjusted accordingly.

Availability of Resources:

There is one main dirt road providing access to the property with an existing network of smaller roads branching off the main road at intervals. While generally in good shape, these roads will require improvements such as widening of the main road, addition of gravel to improve it for all weather surface, and development of parking areas to permit two way vehicular traffic. There are no public use structures on the property. Facilities such as railings along the spine road, fences around sensitive cultural areas and bathrooms are needed to ensure visitor safety and to protect wildlife and plant resources. This is a new refuge and has no current base funding or staffing. All public uses will be dependent on increases to the refuge budget. While some funds or volunteer help can be expected to be provided by the community and local organizations, initial infrastructure and staff needed to support public use is expensive and is unlikely to be provided by outside refuge funding. Initial road improvements are estimated at \$1,800,000.

The proposed hunt requires two weeks of staff time to record and enter applications and at least two

staff each day of hunting - biologist to run the check station and law enforcement person to monitor the hunt. The State Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has indicated they would help run the check station. The hunt club has indicated it is not interested in assisting with the hunt.

Public Review and Comment: Compatibility determination will be attached to the Environmental Assessment and will be part of that public review process.

Use is: Compatible Not Compatible

Justification:

Hunting is listed as one of the six priority public uses in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act. The deer population in Stafford County averages 20-25 deer per square mile. While not as high as in neighboring counties, it is at the upper level of density for the habitat. Overabundance of deer can result in severe degradation of habitat which may take more than a decade to recover. In addition to general decrease in overall habitat quality, impacts also include reduction or elimination of rare or unique plant communities or species, decreases in habitat quality for forest nesting species of birds and small mammals, and a decline in overall deer population health as evidenced by decreased deer body weights, increased occurrence of deformities, increased levels of internal and external parasitism, and decreased body fat deposits. These effects can easily be observed in many neighboring areas of northern Virginia where the forest understory has been eliminated. The property, considering its location, size, soils, and topography, is a unique tract of land. It has a wide variety of habitats which support a diverse mix of plant and wildlife species including some that are rare in the northern Virginia and the mid-Atlantic region. The goal will be to maintain the deer population at a level to ensure the continued health and diversity of the area. Maintaining the current harvest levels will ensure that the deer population does not impact the area until information on population size and health and habitat composition are available to develop a deer management plan.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

Improvement of existing roads for use by vehicles. No dogs or ATVs allowed. Refuge will be closed to all other public uses during the hunt. State and county regulations on method of take and bag limits to apply.

Concurrence: Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System /s/ Anthony Léger, 11/30/00

Signature: Refuge Manager /s/ Gregory Weiler, 10/16/00

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Reevaluation Date:

PRE-ACQUISITION COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Fishing

Refuge Name: Accokeek Creek Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies): Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1939, Refuge Recreational Act of 1962, Endangered Species Act of 1973, and Emergency Wetland Resources Act of 1986.

Refuge Purpose(s):

- (1) for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources.
- (2) for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.
- (3) for incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, protection of natural resources, and conservation of endangered or threatened species.

National Wildlife Refuge System Mission: 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 for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

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Description of Use:

During the public scoping meetings the public expressed the desire to have fishing opportunities on the refuge. Fishing currently occurs on the property at several locations which are accessed by boat by the general public and through the property by a few people. Several local watermen also approached the planning staff, and indicated that they currently store the long poles used for their fish nets and traps on the property and wanted to continue that practice.

The refuge will be open to fishing from sunrise to sunrise, from the shore at the two sites indicated on Map 3. These sites can be accessed through the refuge or via boat access. Boat launching from refuge property will not be accommodated. Fishing from refuge shoreline will be by typical rod and reel setups. No fish traps or trot lines will be allowed. Recreational anglers will not store equipment or clean the fish on the refuge. Fishing by local watermen is a long historical and traditional use of the creeks, and fish pole caching on the refuge to accommodate this use will be allowed by Memorandums of Agreements between the watermen and the refuge. After acquisition of the property, the refuge will work with the watermen to select several areas on the Refuge shoreline where the poles can be continued to be cached. These areas will be away from other public use sites and will be used to cache only poles. Fish nets, gear, traps, etc. will not be stored on the refuge.

Availability of Resources:

There is one main dirt road providing access to the property with an existing network of smaller roads branching off the main road at intervals. While generally in good shape, these roads will require improvements such as widening of the main road, addition of gravel to improve it for all weather surface, and development of parking areas to permit two way vehicular traffic. There are no public use structures on the property. Facilities such as railings along the spine road, fences around sensitive cultural areas and bathrooms are needed to ensure visitor safety and to protect wildlife and plant resources. This is a new refuge and has no current base funding or staffing. All public uses will be dependent on increases to the refuge budget. While some funds or volunteer help can be expected to be provided by the community and local organizations, initial infrastructure and staff needed to support public use is expensive and is unlikely to be provided by outside refuge funding. Initial road improvements are estimated at \$1,800,000. Additional stabilization of the bank at the fishing sites will be necessary to protect habitat and provide visitor safety.

Public Review and Comment: Compatibility determination will be attached to the Environmental Assessment and will be part of that public review process.

Use is: **Compatible** Not Compatible

Justification:

Fishing is one of the six priority public uses identified in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act and currently occurs on the property. There is a long history of use by local residents for fishing activities. Providing several sites on the refuge to allow the public to continue this tradition is appropriate. Designating fishing sites will increase local support for the refuge, and provide opportunities for learn-to-fish or youth fishing educational events.

During the public scoping meetings and in numerous other conversations with local residents it was indicated that the watermen and their lifestyle was an important historical and cultural element of the community. The continued use of the Peninsula for pole caches will not have negative impact on refuge resources and allows the refuge to support a traditional life style that is important not only to the local community but also to refuge education and interpretation programs related to the history of the area and the country.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

Boat launching will not be allowed. Recreational fishing will be by typical rod and reel setups; no fish traps or trot lines will be used. No storage of equipment on site or cleaning of fish will occur. Commercial watermen will need to sign a Memorandum of Agreement with the Refuge to store poles on the property.

***Concurrence: Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System /s/
Anthony Léger, 11/30/00***

Signature: Refuge Manager /s/ Gregory Weiler, 10/16/00

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Reevaluation Date:

PRE-ACQUISITION COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Environmental Education and Interpretation

Refuge Name: Accokeek Creek Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies): Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1939, Refuge Recreational Act of 1962, Endangered Species Act of 1973, and Emergency Wetland Resources Act of 1986.

Refuge Purpose(s):

- (1) for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources.
- (2) for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.
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Description of Use:

The refuge (unless areas are closed to protect sensitive species or habitats) will be open to environmental education and interpretation activities during normal refuge hours. Initially, requests for such activities will be considered on a case by case basis to determine the objectives of the class and the best areas that support those objectives. The refuge will work with the school district, teachers, and local education organizations to develop an integrated education program which best meets the needs of the classes and the opportunities offered by the refuge. The refuge will facilitate the classes but the responsibility for supervision and instruction will remain with the teachers. Permanent sites will not be developed until the refuge has had the opportunity to evaluate the needs of the education program, the sites that best accommodate those needs, the number of requests, and improvements needed to protect resources at those sites.

Availability of Resources:

There is one main dirt road providing access to the property with an existing network of smaller roads branching off the main road at intervals. While generally in good shape, these roads will require improvements such as widening of the main road, addition of gravel to improve it for all weather surface, and development of parking areas to permit two way vehicular traffic. There are no public use structures on the property. Facilities such as railings along the spine road, fences around sensitive cultural areas and bathrooms are needed to ensure visitor safety and to protect wildlife and plant resources. This is a new refuge and has no current base funding or staffing. All public uses will be dependent on increases to the refuge budget. While some funds or volunteer help can be expected to be provided by the community and local organizations, initial infrastructure and staff needed to support public use is expensive and is unlikely to be provided by outside refuge funding. Initial road

improvements are estimated at \$1,800,000. While limited access can be provided for education programs initially, addition of an outdoor recreation planner to the staff is needed to develop and coordinate this program.

Public Review and Comment: Compatibility determination will be attached to the Environmental Assessment and will be part of that public review process.

Use is: **Compatible** Not Compatible

Justification: One of the goals of the refuge is to promote an awareness of ecological functions and the interrelationship between human activities and the natural system and to educate and motivate people so they can effectively support wildlife conservation. Considering its location, size, soils, and topography, the refuge is a unique tract of land. It has a wide variety of habitats which support a diverse mix of plant and wildlife species including some that are rare in the northern Virginia and the mid-Atlantic region. The area has a history rich in cultural influence from use by native Americans, to early land owners who were prominent in the early development of this country, through the Civil War era. The refuge provides incredible opportunities to function as an outdoor classroom both as a place to conduct on site biological and resource oriented education and for the cultural and historical significance of the property.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

Stipulations will addressed on a case by case or site specific basis at the time of the request.

***Concurrence: Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System /s/
Anthony Léger, 11/30/00***

Signature: Refuge Manager /s/ Gregory Weiler, 10/16/00

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Reevaluation Date:

PRE-ACQUISITION COMPATIBILITY DETERMINATION

Use: Wildlife Observation and Photography

Refuge Name: Accokeek Creek Refuge

Establishing and Acquisition Authority(ies): Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1939, Refuge Recreational Act of 1962, Endangered Species Act of 1973, and Emergency Wetland Resources Act of 1986.

Refuge Purpose(s):

- (1) for the development, management, advancement, conservation, and protection of fish and wildlife resources.
- (2) for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.
- (3) for incidental fish and wildlife-oriented recreational development, protection of natural resources, and conservation of endangered or threatened species.

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Description of Use:

Public use of designated roads, parking areas, and trails for the purpose of wildlife observation and photography. This is a new refuge and the area has not been open to the general public in the past except through permission by the property caretaker. Public use will be limited to existing designated roads and trails from sunrise to sunset. The proposed vehicular and walking trails will generally be open year round unless closed to protect sensitive species or to repair damage due to storms, etc. Since this is a new refuge, overall visitation numbers can be expected to be low for the first few years. Impacts to habitat will be minor and will largely be associated with the widening of the road and establishment of several small parking areas. Total acreage impacted will be less than 10 acres. Impacts to wildlife will be minor and restricted to temporary disturbance along the access road and walking trails. Map 3 graphically depicts the trails that will be opened to the public if the refuge is established. Trails openings will be gradual and will be dependent on land acquisition and road and trail improvements. Additional trails will not be opened until additional biological information and data on the resources of the property have been compiled.

Availability of Resources:

There is one main dirt road providing access to the property with an existing network of smaller roads branching off the main road at intervals. While generally in good shape, these roads will require improvements such as widening of the main road, addition of gravel to improve it for all weather surface, and development of parking areas to permit two way vehicular traffic. There are no public use structures on the property. Facilities such as railings along the spine road, fences around sensitive cultural areas and bathrooms are needed to ensure visitor safety and to protect wildlife and plant resources. This is a new refuge and has no current base funding or staffing. All public uses will be

dependent on increases to the refuge budget. While some funds or volunteer help can be expected to be provided by the community and local organizations, initial infrastructure and staff needed to support public use is expensive and is unlikely to be provided by outside refuge funding. Initial road improvements are estimated at \$1,800,000.

Public Review and Comment: Compatibility determination will be attached to the Environmental Assessment and will be part of that public review process.

Use is: **Compatible** Not Compatible

Justification:

To paraphrase the mission of the refuge system, we protect and manage land and wildlife resources for the benefit of the American people. To provide the opportunity, when possible, for the public to visit a refuge and observe wildlife is the simplest and most basic method of allowing the public to see, learn about, and appreciate natural resources. It allows them to gain an understanding of the importance of the natural world to the human quality of life and their role in preserving and enhancing wildlife habitat. For many, the only opportunity to gain that experience first hand will be on a national wildlife refuge. Public use will be low during the first several years due to limited funding and staff in carrying out proposed improvements needed to facilitate public use, and the fact that people outside the area will not be aware of a new refuge for the first few years. During that time frame additional resource data will be gathered and used to evaluate the initial trail selections.

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility:

Temporary closures to protect sensitive species.

Concurrence: Regional Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System /s/ Anthony Léger, 11/30/00

Signature: Refuge Manager /s/ Gregory Weiler, 10/16/00

Mandatory 10 or 15 year Reevaluation Date: May 2010