

Compatibility Determination for Environmental Education and Interpretation, Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Use Category

Environmental Education and Interpretation

Refuge Use Types

Environmental education (not conducted by NWRS staff or authorized agents),
Environmental education (NWRS staff and authorized agents), Environmental
education (general), Interpretation (NWRS staff and authorized agents),
Interpretation (not conducted by NWRS staff or authorized agents)

Refuge

Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge

Refuge Purposes and Establishing and Acquisition Authorities

“...as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife.” (Executive Order No. 7160, dated 1935)

“...for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds.” (Migratory Bird Conservation Act, February 18, 1929)

“...for any other management purposes, for migratory birds.” (Migratory Bird Conservation Act 16 U.S.C. 715d)

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?

Yes

This compatibility determination reviews and replaces the compatibility determination of the 2006 CCP for Environmental Education and Interpretation

signed February 23, 2006.

What is the use?

Environmental education and interpretation consist of activities conducted by refuge staff, volunteers, and teachers. Interpretation occurs in less formal activities with refuge staff, volunteers or through exhibits, educational kits, signs, and brochures. Environmental education and interpretation activities are conducted at the Refuge office and on the Refuge by non-staff members. Refuge staff may conduct these uses as availability permits.

Is the use a priority public use?

Yes

Where would the use be conducted?

Refuge management does not currently restrict public access to any area of the Refuge via foot. Vehicle accessible roads are clearly delineated on the Refuge brochure. Appropriate areas for these uses will be determined prior to activities taking place.

Habitat types may include wetlands, wetland meadows, uplands and sandhills. Key wildlife species include sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, Bald eagles, black-tailed prairie dogs and burrowing owls. Plant species include bulrushes, wild rice, smartweed, arrowhead, Maximilian and Nuttall's sunflowers, goldenrods, cordgrass, Canada bluejoint, and big bluestem, Nebraska sedge, several species of willows and indigo bush.

When would the use be conducted?

The Refuge is open to public use dawn to dusk, every day, unless otherwise posted.

How would the use be conducted?

Limited staff and the sparsely populated landscape contribute to a rather small environmental education and interpretation program at the Refuge. While the amount of environmental education and interpretation activities is limited, excellent opportunities are available on the Refuge.

There are four vault toilets, camp sites and one boat ramp located at the Little White River Recreation Area. Camping is primitive and allowed throughout the entire LWRRRA. No reservations or costs are needed for any of these uses. There are no trash receptacles, and all trash is to be packed out with the users. Manual powered boats may be pulled to open bodies of water from vehicle-accessible roads and parking lots. There are restrooms open 24 hours a day at the Visitor Center on Bird Road.

Why is this use being proposed or reevaluated?

Environmental education and interpretation are priority public uses listed in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. By facilitating environmental education, Refuge visitors would gain knowledge and an appreciation of fish, wildlife, and their habitats, which would lead to increased public awareness and stewardship of natural resources. Increased appreciation for natural resources would support and complement the Service's actions in achieving the purposes of the refuge and the mission of the Refuge System.

Availability of Resources

Existing programs such as current Refuge signs and brochures can be updated with available resources. Current Refuge staff may improve the environmental education and interpretation program if opportunities exist. Some programs and requests may be denied due to limited staff availability. Visitors are highly encouraged to hold their own education and interpretation programs.

Anticipated Impacts of the Use

Potential impacts of a proposed use on the refuge's purposes and the Refuge System mission

The effects and impacts of the proposed use to Refuge resources, whether adverse or beneficial, are those that are reasonably foreseeable and have a reasonably close causal relationship to the proposed use. This CD 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." Wildlife and habitat will not be more than negligibly impacted by the action and have been dismissed from further analyses.

Short-term impacts

Minimal disturbances to wildlife and wildlife habitat would result from these uses at the current and proposed levels. Adverse impacts are minimized through careful timing and placement of activities. Some disturbance to wildlife may occur in areas frequented by visitors. There may be minor damage to vegetation, littering, and increased maintenance. Location and time limitations placed on environmental education and interpretation activities would ensure that this activity would have only minor impacts on wildlife and would not detract from the primary purposes of the Refuge. No cultural resources would be impacted. No impact to endangered species should occur.

Long-term impacts

No long-term impacts are anticipated.

Public Review and Comment

Determination

Is the use compatible?

Yes

Stipulations Necessary to Ensure Compatibility

1. Allow environmental education and interpretation only in designated areas and under the guidance of Refuge staff, a volunteer, or a trained teacher to ensure minimal disturbance to wildlife and vegetation, and to minimize conflicts between public use groups.
2. Refuge staff will provide these programs dependent upon staff availability.

Justification

The stipulations outlined above would help ensure that the use is compatible at Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge. Environmental Education and Interpretation 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 that Environmental Education and Interpretation at the Refuge 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. The appropriate and compatible uses of Environmental Education and Interpretation would be a use of the Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge through which the public can develop an appreciation for wildlife and wild lands.