



DOI Priority Goal Action Plan

Expand Hunting and Fishing Opportunities

Goal Leader: Aurelia Skipwith, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

Deputy Goal Leader: Shaun Sanchez, Acting Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System, FWS

Overview

Goal Statement

- By September 30, 2021, the FWS will expand hunting and fishing opportunities on 2.25 million acres of National Wildlife Refuges and National Fish Hatcheries, and open or expand an estimated 1,200 opportunities.

Challenge

- FWS proposes to align federal regulations with state regulations whenever possible, and streamline requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Through engagement with the regional hunting and fishing chiefs and through the rule-making process, comments and recommendations by states and partners regarding hunting access will be addressed.
- Publishing of the annual 2021-2022 Hunting and Fishing Rule by July 31, 2021.

Opportunity

- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is engaged in a national effort to implement Secretarial Order (S.O.) 3347 and S.O. 3356 to enhance public access and recreation on public lands and to promote recruitment, retention, and reactivation of hunters and anglers.
- The Service's Hunt/fish Opportunity Tool (SHOT) Station Reports provide a resource for guiding regional efforts in developing opening and expansion packages, identifying potential opportunities for increased access, and promoting greater alignment to state hunting and fishing regulations.

FWS Hunting and Fishing Leadership

Aurelia Skipwith, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Shaun Sanchez, Acting Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System

Chiefs of Hunting and Fishing

- Kate Harrigan, National Chief of Hunting and Fishing, Headquarters
- Stacey Lowe, Regional Chief of Hunting and Fishing, Interior Region 1
- Tamar Kavaldjian-Liskey, Regional Chief of Hunting and Fishing, Interior Region 2/4
- Brandon Jones, Regional Chief of Hunting and Fishing, Interior Region 3
- Aaron Mize, Regional Chief of Hunting and Fishing, Interior Region 5/7
- Carl Millegan, Regional Chief of Hunting and Fishing, Interior Region 6/8
- Bob Peyton, Regional Chief of Hunting and Fishing, Interior Region 9/12
- Carl Lunderstadt, Regional Chief of Hunting and Fishing, Interior Region 10
- Ryan Mollnow, Regional Chief of Hunting and Fishing, Interior Region 11

Goal Structure & Strategies

- Each year the FWS issues a Federal Register Notice to advise the public of new or expanded acres and opportunities available for hunting and fishing at National Wildlife Refuges and National Fish Hatcheries.
- During the rule making process, the FWS will receive public comments that can affect the final rule to open and expand hunting and fishing.
- The Department reviews the proposed rule for the Federal Register in April and will clear the final rule for the Federal Register in July.

Summary of Progress – FY 2020 Q4

- **Level of Results Achieved**
 - FWS delivered the final rule to the Federal Register on July 20, 2020. The Federal Register published the final rule on August 31, 2020. This rule opened or expanded 859 hunting and fishing opportunities on 2.266 million acres.
- **Likelihood of Success**
 - High
- **Basis for the Assessment**
 - This goal is on target for accomplishment based on past experience with this process.
- **Actions planned to ensure achievement of the goal**
 - The final rule was published in the Federal Register prior to fall hunting seasons, effectively opening and expanding the changes made through rule. FWS has already begun preparing packages to develop the FY 2021 annual rule. Packages will be submitted to FWS Headquarters in Q2.

Key Milestones

FY 2020

| Key Milestones | Q1 Plan | Q1 Actual | Q2 Plan | Q2 Actual | Q3 Plan | Q3 Actual | Q4 Plan | Q4 Actual | Comments |
|---|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|-----------|----------|
| FWS complete Hunt/Fish Opportunity Tool Report | | | | | | | | | |
| Stations submit hunting and fishing opening packages to NWRS HQ | | | 1/31/20 | 1/24/20 | | | | | |
| Proposed Rule prepared for Federal Register | | | | | | | | | |
| Proposed Rule cleared by DOI for Federal Register | | | | 3/20/20 | 4/3/20 | | | | |
| Final Rule Publication | | | | | | | | | |
| The final rule cleared by DOI for publication | | | | | | | 7/17/20 | 7/20/20 | |

Key Milestones

| FWS Expanded Public Access to Lands and Waters for Outdoor Recreation | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|----------|
| | FY 2017 Actual | FY 2018 Actual | FY 2019 Actual | FY 2020 Planned | FY 2020 Actual | FY 2021 Planned | FY 2021 Actual | Comments |
| # of FWS acres newly opened to hunting and fishing | 71,769 | 251,000 | 1,432,625 | 2,000,000 | 2,266,326 | 250,000 | | |
| # of opened or expanded opportunities for hunters and anglers | | | | 700 | 859 | 500 | | |

Note: Number of opportunities began to be tracked in FY2020

Data Accuracy and Reliability

The Service's Hunt/fish Opportunity Tool (SHOT) is a web-based assessment tool developed by the FWS to assess all FWS lands and waters for alignment to state hunting and fishing regulations. Hunting data was captured geospatially at the hunt-unit level and fishing was captured at the field station level. This assessment data has been used to generate SHOT Station Reports, which provide a resource for guiding regional efforts in developing opening and expanding packages, identifying potential opportunities for increased access, and promoting greater alignment to state hunting and fishing regulations.

The FWS works closely with the Solicitor's Office on finalizing the Hunting and Fishing rule to open or expand hunting and fishing across FWS lands and waters.

For this goal, for the 2020-2021 annual rule, note that we provide these targets early in our defined regulatory cycle. We provide our best estimate based on preliminary input from our National Wildlife Refuges across the country. Often, as our rulemaking progresses and we conduct further consultation with states and coordination with other partners, we find new and additional opportunities. That is why the estimated number of opportunities in this reporting are higher than previous estimates. For this goal, an opportunity is defined as one species on one field station in one state.

Additional Information

Contributing Programs

Organizations:

- U.S Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Wildlife Refuge System - Lead

Program Activities:

- The National Wildlife Refuge System has Hunting and Fishing Chiefs assigned to lead this program.
- The Fish and Aquatic Conservation program provides input on opportunities at National Fish Hatcheries.

President's Management Agenda

- Opening and expanding recreational opportunities improves the customer experience with federal services.

Regulations:

- This rule provides an annual update and revision to 50 CFR Part 32.

Policies:

- Supports S.O. 3347 and S.O. 3356

Stakeholder / Congressional Consultations

This program is being pursued to collaborate with States and better align our hunting and fishing regulations with state regulations. The annual rule making process requires public engagement before the rule is finalized. The FWS provides an opportunity for public comment on any new hunting or fishing opportunity.