

San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Hunt Plan

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex
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1. INTRODUCTION

A. General Refuge Information

The San Diego National Wildlife Refuge (NWR or Refuge) is located in southwestern San Diego County, California (Figure 1). Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service or USFWS) as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS or Refuge System), the Refuge protects a variety of native upland and wetland habitats and plays a critical role in the regional effort to maintain the high biological diversity of southwestern San Diego County. More than 16 species currently listed as threatened or endangered under the Federal Endangered Species Act and/or the California Endangered Species Act are known to either occur on the Refuge or have occurred here within the last 20 years. Many other species of concern, including at least 35 species covered by the San Diego Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) (County of San Diego 1998) have also been documented on the Refuge.

B. Refuge Establishment, Purposes, and Goals

In 1997, the Service approved a Land Protection Plan (LPP; USFWS 1997) for the San Diego NWR's Otay-Sweetwater Unit and the Vernal Pools Stewardship Project. The San Diego NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) were completed and signed in April 2017 and the Notice of Availability of the Final CCP for the San Diego NWR was published in the Federal Register on August 10, 2021. The CCP outlines the conservation and management actions to be taken over the next 15 years and the accompanying Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluated the effects of implementing the actions presented in the CCP (USFWS 2017). The purposes of the San Diego NWR are "to protect, manage, and restore habitats for federally listed endangered and threatened species and migratory birds and to maintain and enhance the biological diversity of native plants and animals" (USFWS 1997).

Refuge goals, as detailed in the San Diego NWR CCP, are:

Goal 1: Protect, manage, and where appropriate, enhance, or restore habitat to support the recovery of the federally and State listed endangered and threatened species and other species of concern currently or historically present on the Refuge.

Goal 2: Protect, manage, and restore the Refuge's native habitats, MSCP-covered species, and other species of concern for their inherent value and to contribute to the regional effort of conserving the biological diversity of southwestern San Diego County.

Goal 3: Engage in partnerships and provide leadership in coordinating land management and acquisition efforts throughout southwestern San Diego County in support of the MSCP and other resource protection objectives developed for the Region.

Goal 4: Provide safe and high-quality opportunities for compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses that foster public appreciation of the unique natural heritage of the San Diego region.

C. Public Use

The Refuge is not currently open for hunting. There are, however, several opportunities for hunting in the general vicinity of the Refuge, including the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Otay Mountain Ecological Reserve and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Otay Mountain Wilderness, where hunting and non-commercial trapping are allowed under State and local laws and in accordance with BLM's Wilderness Area regulations. Other CDFW hunting areas include the nearby Hollenbeck Canyon Wildlife Area, where pheasant and quail hunting is permitted per State regulations; Boden

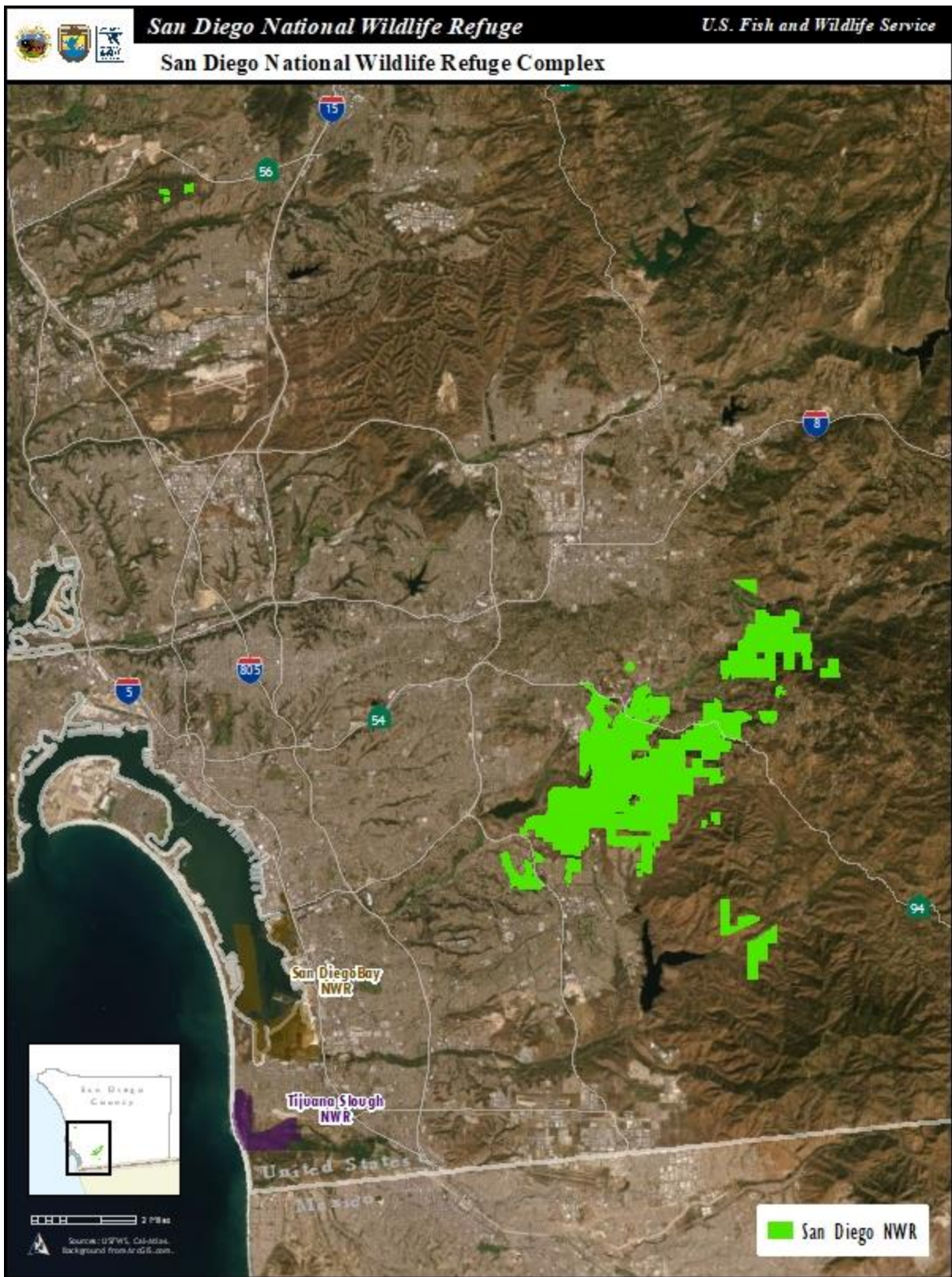


Figure 1. Location Map – San Diego National Wildlife Refuge.

Canyon Ecological Reserve, where upland game hunting is permitted in accordance with the general hunting regulations and at such times and in specific areas as designated by CDFW; and the San Felipe Valley Wildlife Area, where deer and quail hunting are permitted in accordance with State regulations. The U.S. Forest Service's Cleveland National Forest is open to hunting of certain bird and game species, including deer, in accordance with the current season schedule and hunting regulations set by CDFW. Hunting is also permitted on some Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands near the Refuge, as well as other BLM areas located in eastern and northeast San Diego County.

Locally, Barrett Reservoir is open by reservation for waterfowl hunting throughout the season established for the southern California zone, and turkey hunting is offered at Sutherland Reservoir on a Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday schedule for the fall season (November) and the spring season (end of March to beginning of May). Periodically, San Diego County has approved a youth turkey hunt at the Santa Ysabel East Open Space Preserve.

D. Purpose

The purpose of this hunt plan is to outline how the hunt program will be operated on the Refuge. It has been prepared as a step-down plan in association with the development of the Final CCP and EA (USFWS 2017). This hunt plan also documents how the Refuge will provide safe hunting opportunities that avoid impacts to sensitive Refuge resources and minimize the potential for conflicts with other priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses.

The Service has determined that the hunting of big game (i.e., deer), resident small game (i.e., rabbits), and resident and migratory upland game birds (i.e., dove, quail) on the San Diego NWR is a compatible wildlife-dependent recreational use (refer to Appendix C-1 of the San Diego NWR CCP (USFWS 2017)).

The EA prepared in association with the CCP also concluded that wildlife and habitat resources managed on the Refuge are healthy and robust enough to support regulated hunting in designated portions of the Refuge. In addition, the Service concluded that hunting activities will not affect or are not likely to adversely affect any of the special status species or their designated critical habitats on the hunt area of the Refuge, including the threatened coastal California gnatcatcher (*Polioptila californica californica*), endangered Quino checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas editha quino*), threatened Hermes copper butterfly (*Lycaena hermes*), and endangered Mexican flannelbush (*Fremontodendron mexicanum*). The hunting area will not include known areas of Quino larval host plants and will avoid ridgelines that adult butterflies use, and Hermes copper are extirpated from the area. The timing of hunting seasons will minimize effects to breeding gnatcatchers. No other public uses will be allowed in this area of the Refuge to further avoid impacts to listed species.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) considerations by the Service for hunted migratory game bird species are addressed by the programmatic document "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement: Issuance of Annual Regulations Permitting the Sport Hunting of Migratory Birds" filed with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on June 9, 1988. The Service published a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on June 16, 1988 (53 FR 22582), and the Record of Decision on August 18, 1988 (53 FR 31341). This document addresses the NEPA requirement to analyze the potential effects of issuing annual regulations permitting the sport hunting of migratory birds. In addition, the Service in 2010 (75 FR39577) issued a draft Supplemental EIS on the setting of annual regulations permitting the hunting of migratory birds.

The Office of Migratory Bird Management sets the Migratory Bird Frameworks through their annual regulations permitting the sport hunting of migratory birds. The individual States set seasons within those frameworks. Each Refuge considers the cumulative impacts to hunted migratory species of these frameworks and develops their hunting program accordingly. Season and bag limits for

Refuges open to hunting are never longer or higher than the State regulations, and in some cases may be more restrictive.

The Service Regional and Refuge biologists along with scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Division and university researchers meet twice annually with State flyway representatives to discuss inventory data and survey reports for migratory game bird populations which are hunted, proposed for hunting, and closed to hunting. The Service bases its migratory bird season length and bag limits for the various species based on these surveys. A species must have a harvestable surplus to be considered for hunting.

2. CONFORMANCE WITH STATUTORY AUTHORITIES

National Wildlife Refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the Refuge System; purposes for which individual Refuges were established; and policies, laws, and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (Administration Act), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Improvement Act) (16 USC 668dd-ee), the Refuge Recreation Act (Recreation Act) of 1962 (16 USC 460k), and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and the Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge Manual.

The mission of the 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” (Improvement Act); and two of the stated goals of the Refuge System include:

- Provide and enhance opportunities to participate in compatible wildlife-dependent recreation (hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation); and
- Foster understanding and instill appreciation of the diversity and interconnectedness of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats.

The Administration Act states that Refuge management must focus first and foremost on the conservation of fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats, while the Recreation Act authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer areas within the Refuge System for public recreation as an appropriate incidental or secondary use only to the extent that doing so is practicable and not inconsistent with the primary purpose(s) for which Congress and the Service established the areas.

The Improvement Act further defines the priorities for public uses on Refuges and establishes six wildlife-dependent recreational uses (i.e., hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation) as the priority general public uses of the Refuge System. These uses are to receive priority consideration in Refuge planning and management; and when the Secretary determines that a proposed wildlife-dependent recreational use is a compatible use within a Refuge, that activity should be facilitated, subject to such restrictions or regulations as may be necessary, reasonable, and appropriate.

To implement the provisions of the Improvement Act, the Service has adopted a Compatibility Policy (*Fish and Wildlife Service Manual, Part 603FW2*) that includes guidelines for determining if a use proposed on a Refuge is compatible with the purposes for which the Refuge was established. A compatible use is defined in the policy as a proposed or existing wildlife-dependent recreation use or any other use of a NWR that, based on sound professional judgment, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the NWR mission or the purposes for which the Refuge was established. Sound professional judgment is defined as a finding, determination, or decision that is consistent with the principles of sound fish and wildlife management and administration, available

science and resources (e.g., funding, personnel, facilities, other infrastructure), and applicable laws. The Service strives to provide wildlife-dependent recreational uses when compatible. If financial resources are not available to design, operate, and maintain a priority use, the Refuge Manager will take reasonable steps to obtaining outside assistance from the State and other conservation interests.

Hunting is identified in the Improvement Act as a priority use for Refuges when it is compatible with Refuge purposes and the mission of the NWRS. The conclusion of the compatibility determination prepared to address hunting on the San Diego NWR is that a hunting program, to be outlined in a step-down hunt plan, is compatible with the purposes for which the Refuge was established. The Compatibility Determination for hunting is provided in Appendix C-1 of the San Diego NWR CCP.

Finally, the provisions governing hunting (and sport fishing) on Refuges are provided in 50 CFR Part 32.1. Hunting on a refuge is regulated to:

- Ensure compatibility with refuge purpose(s);
- Properly manage the fish and wildlife resource(s);
- Protect other refuge values;
- Ensure refuge visitor safety; and,
- Provide opportunities for quality fish-dependent and wildlife-dependent recreation.

3. HUNTING PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The hunting program would support Refuge Goal 4 of providing compatible wildlife-dependent recreation.

The Refuge's management goals, objectives, and strategies are designed to achieve the Refuge's purposes; Objective 4.1 under Goal 4 is described in the CCP as:

Within 18 months of the approval of the San Diego NWR CCP, complete a hunt plan for the Otay-Sweetwater Unit that will ensure high-quality upland hunting opportunities on about 160 acres within the Otay Mesa and Lakes area. Within a year of completing the hunt plan, publish the final refuge-specific regulations in the Federal Register.

Strategies for the San Diego NWR hunt program include:

- In cooperation with Bureau of Land Management and California Department of Fish and Wildlife, establish an annual special hunt for youth and disabled hunters.
- Working closely with CDFW and the hunting community, identify needs and funding for facilities that when implemented will support a quality hunting program that is compatible with Refuge purposes.

The Refuge will develop and manage the hunting program based on the following Service quality criteria (Service Manual, 605, FW1):

- Promote safety of participants, other visitors, and facilities;
- Promote compliance with applicable laws and regulations and responsible behavior;
- Minimize or eliminate conflict with fish and wildlife population or habitat goals or objectives in an approved plan;
- Minimize conflicts with other compatible wildlife-dependent recreation;
- Minimize conflicts with neighboring landowners;
- Promote accessibility and availability to a broad spectrum of the American people;
- Promote resource stewardship and conservation;
- Promote public understanding and increase public appreciation of America's natural resources and our role in managing and conserving these resources;

- Provide reliable/reasonable opportunities to experience wildlife;
- Use facilities that are accessible to people and blend into the natural setting; and,
- Use visitor satisfaction to help define and evaluate programs.

This Hunt Plan was developed to provide safe hunting opportunities, while minimizing conflicts with other priority wildlife-dependent recreational uses. The hunting program will be conducted in a safe and cost-effective manner. Hunting will be permitted in accordance with State and Federal regulations to the maximum extent practicable, with restrictions on specific species hunted and dates of hunting, to ensure that it will not interfere with the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats. Therefore, the sport of hunting on the Refuge complies with State regulations, the Administration Act as amended by the Improvement Act, and the Refuge Recreation Act.

4. ASSESSMENT

A. Are wildlife populations present in numbers sufficient to sustain optimum population levels for priority Refuge objectives other than hunting?

Yes, targeted wildlife populations are present in sufficient numbers to ensure that Refuge objectives for management of these species can be sustained. The Refuge will adopt harvest regulations set by the State of California that uses concepts of density dependent compensatory mortality and adaptive harvest management to ensure sustained game species populations. In addition, impacts to non-target species are minimized through regulations related to when, where, and how hunting can occur on the Refuge.

Further, the remaining portions of the Refuge are closed to hunting and large areas of the Refuge are closed to all public uses to provide sanctuary for target and non-target species. High quality opportunities for other wildlife-dependent recreational uses including wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation are provided in portions of the McGinty Mountain, Sweetwater River, San Miguel Mountain, and Del Mar Mesa Refuge Management Areas.

B. Is there competition for habitat between target species and other wildlife?

Possibly; while each species occupies a unique niche, there is only a finite amount of habitat available to satisfy various life cycle requirements of water, food, cover, breeding and resting areas.

C. Are there unacceptable levels of predation by target species on other wildlife forms?

No unacceptable levels of predation are known for species that may prey on other wildlife.

D. Are target species exotic or non-endemic to the refuge?

Some target species are non-endemic, for example Eurasian collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), spotted dove (*Spilopelia chinensis*), and ringed turtle dove (*Streptopelia risoria*).

E. If applicable, is hunting addressed as a strategy in the refuge's Habitat Management Plan?

A Habitat Management Plan has not been prepared for the Refuge.

5. MEASURES TAKEN TO AVOID CONFLICTS WITH OTHER MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

A. Biological Conflicts

To avoid significant adverse effects to non-target species and species of conservation concern including Quino checkerspot butterfly (*Euphydryas editha quino*) and coastal California gnatcatcher (*Poliophtila californica californica*) and their designated critical habitats, the following measures will be implemented as part of the hunt program:

- Limit hunting to the designated area within the Otay Mesa and Lakes Management Area;
- Limit shot permitted on the Refuge to approved non-toxic shot;
- Ensure periodic law enforcement presence in the area throughout the hunt season to minimize excessive harvest and other infractions (e.g., illegal use of lead shot; take of non-game species; littering, trespass into closed areas); and,
- Post information about the importance of protection non-target species at kiosks, on the Refuge website and in hunting-related Refuge outreach materials.

B. Visitor Services Conflicts

Conflicts between hunting and other Refuge public uses will be minimized by:

- Clearly defining hunting and non-hunting areas within the Refuge;
- Maintaining hunting area signs to clearly define the boundaries of the designated hunting area;
- Managing the hunting program in strict accordance with all applicable Federal laws (50 CFR Subchapter C) and consistent with applicable State laws;
- Coordinating field checks by refuge law enforcement officers with Refuge staff and CDFW personnel to ensure compliance with all applicable hunting regulations;
- Providing information about the Refuge hunting program through signs, kiosks, brochures, and the Refuge's website at https://www.fws.gov/refuge/San_Diego/visit/visitor_activities.html.

C. Administrative Conflicts

To avoid administrative conflicts arising from hunters not familiar with the Refuge specific regulations, hunting information will be posted on the Refuge website, in outreach materials, and in conjunction with adjacent landowners/partners at hunt area access points. In addition, we will work with CDFW to have Refuge specific take regulations and other information posted on their website and/or in their regulations.

6. DESCRIPTION OF HUNT PROGRAM

A. Overview

The Refuge CCP identified Management Areas within the Otay –Sweetwater Unit (Figure 2). An approximately 160-acre area within the Otay Mesa and Lakes Management Area has been designated for hunting (Figure 3). The area is generally south of Otay Lakes Road and east of Lower Otay Reservoir. CDFW and BLM lands on either side of the Refuge hunt area are open to hunting. Vegetation within the area includes primarily coastal sage scrub with some southern mixed chaparral and cypress forest. Because this area was burned by wildfire in 2003 and 2007, non-native grasses have invaded the native habitats. Designated critical habitat for both Quino checkerspot butterfly and California gnatcatcher occur on the parcel (Figure 4). Detailed descriptions of Refuge habitats and associated plant and wildlife species are presented in Chapter 4 of the Final CCP.

B. San Diego National Wildlife Refuge

Upland Game Bird Hunting

- Hunting is permitted on the designated area of the Refuge and is limited to quail, mourning and white-winged dove, spotted and ringed turtle dove, and Eurasian

collared-dove, subject to the following conditions:

- Archery hunting of quail is limited to September 1 to the end date established by CDFW.
- Hunting of Eurasian collared-dove is limited to September 1 to the end date established by CDFW.

Resident Small Game Hunting

- Hunting is permitted on the designated area of the Refuge and is limited to brush and cottontail rabbit, and jackrabbit, subject to the following conditions:
 - Hunting of brush and cottontail rabbit is limited to September 1 to the end date established by CDFW.
 - Hunting of jackrabbit is limited to September 1 to the end of February.

Big Game Hunting

- Hunting of Big Game is limited to mule deer and is permitted on the designated area of the Refuge in accordance with CDFW regulations.

C. Consultation and Coordination with the State

The Service manages the Refuge's land, habitats, and facilities. Both the Service and CDFW participate in enforcing applicable Federal and State laws and Refuge regulations. To assure that hunted populations are sustainable, the California Fish and Game Commission, in consultation with CDFW, annually review the population censuses to establish season lengths and harvest levels. The Refuge will follow all guidance resulting from this annual State review. In addition, CDFW biologists develop their deer hunting regulations based on habitat and population assessments, harvest information, research, monitoring, and estimates of the deer populations in California. The Wildlife Branch of CDFW also prepares management plans, recommends management actions, and develops hunting regulation recommendations for ten upland game species.

The Refuge will coordinate with CDFW on these activities. The Refuge will meet annually with CDFW to review the Refuge and Department's hunt programs and seek collaborative opportunities to improve the programs. The Refuge will also coordinate with BLM annually.

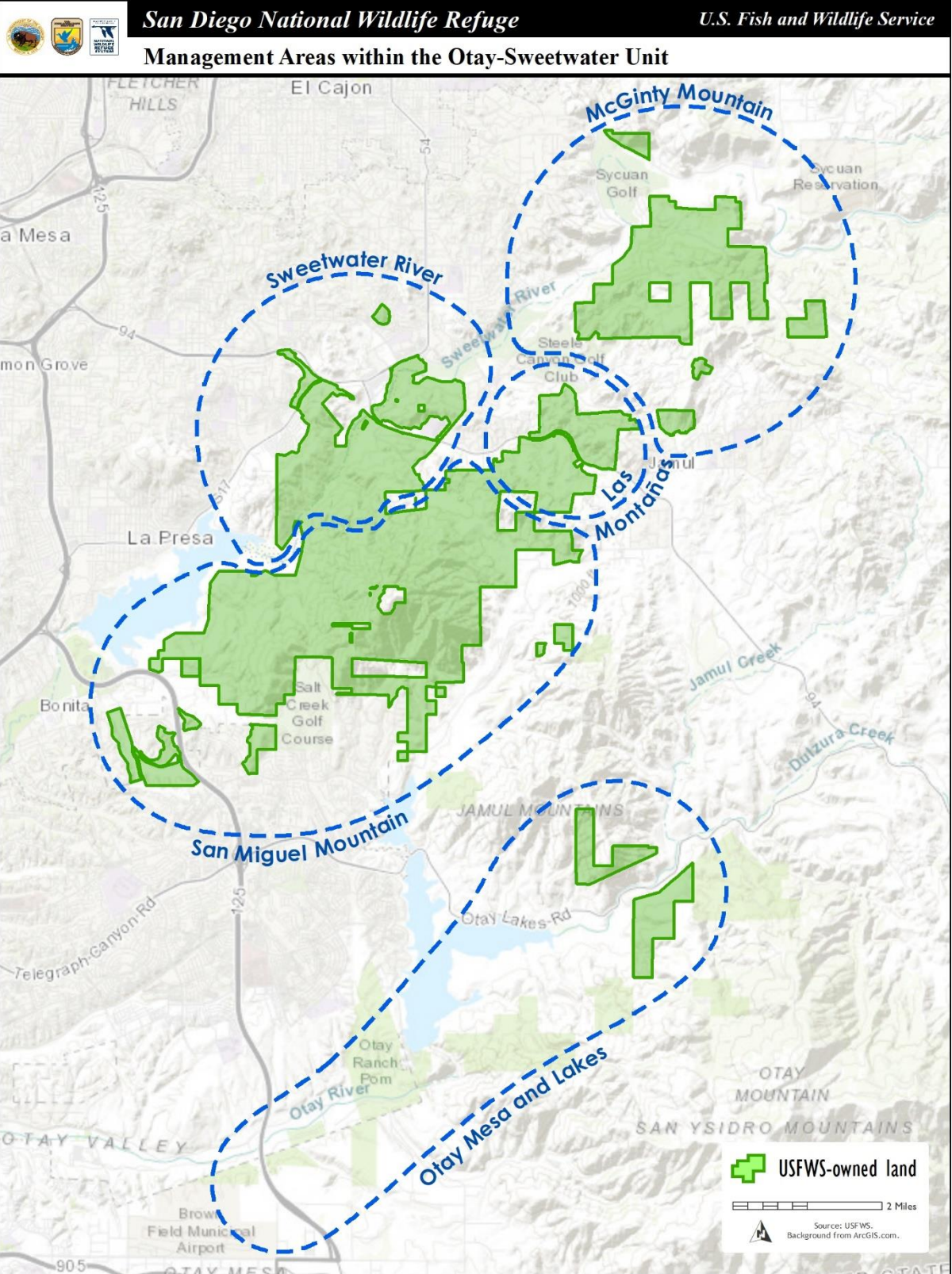


Figure 2. Management Areas within the Otay-Sweetwater Unit of the San Diego NWR.

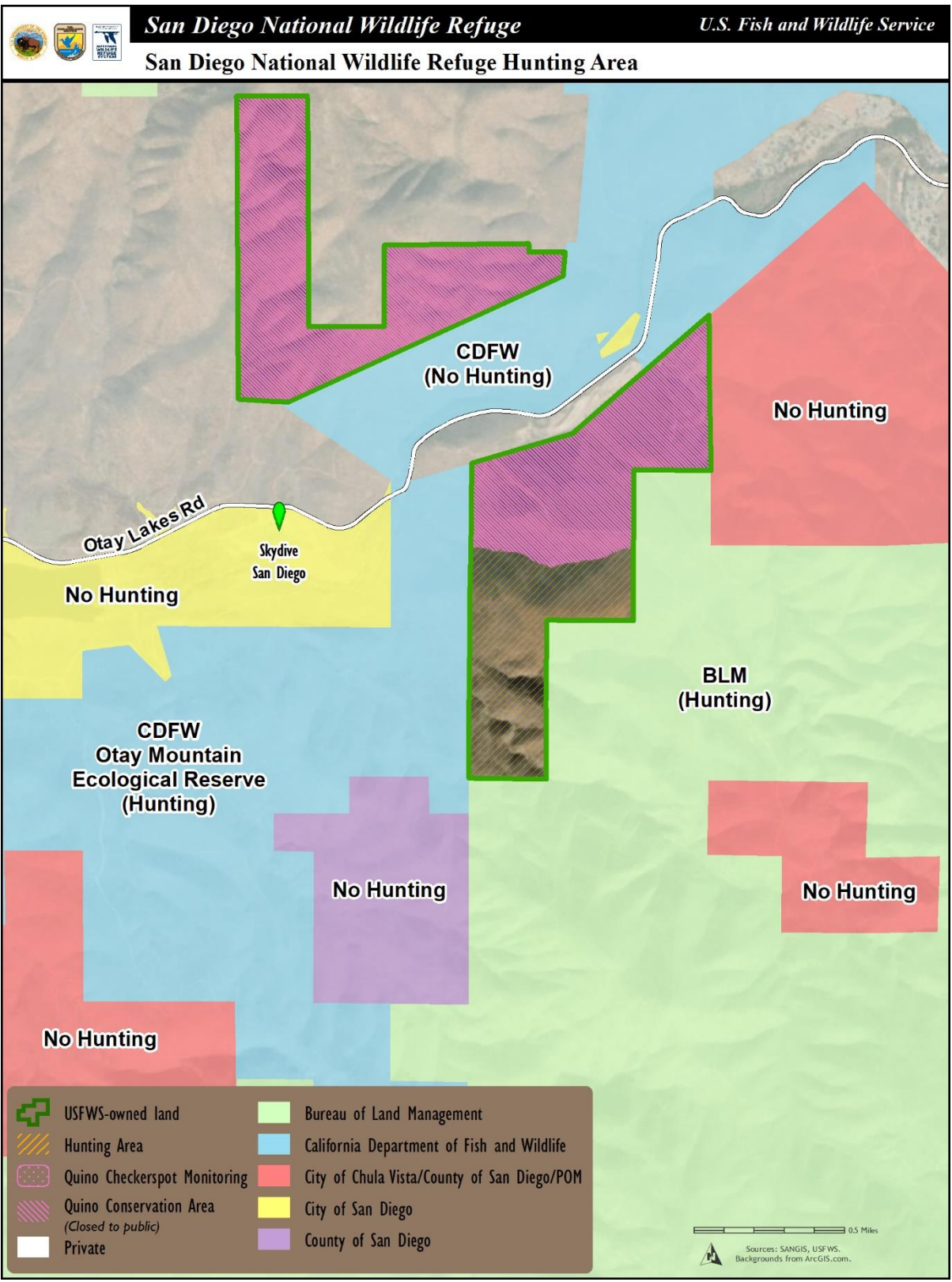


Figure 3. Designated Hunting Area on San Diego NWR.

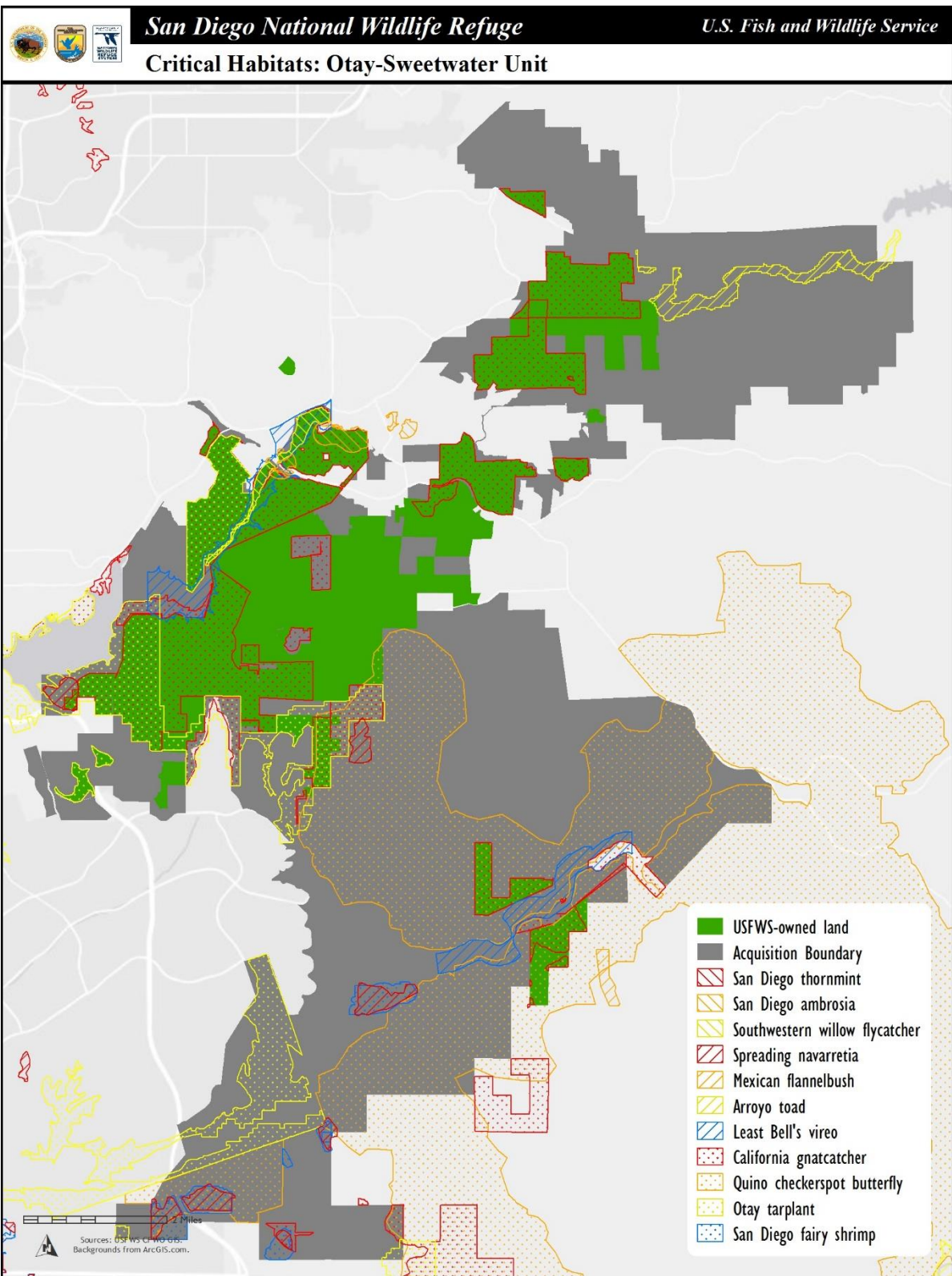


Figure 4. Designated critical habitats on San Diego NWR. Hunting area includes Quino checkerspot butterfly and California gnatcatcher critical habitats.

D. Law Enforcement

The hunting program will be managed in strict accordance with all applicable Federal laws (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 50 subchapter C) and to the extent practicable, consistent with applicable State laws. Enforcement of Refuge violations associated with management of the Refuge is the responsibility of Federal wildlife officers. Other special agents and State game wardens may assist the Refuge's officers. Law enforcement in the hunting area will be provided by San Diego National Wildlife Refuge Complex wildlife officers and CDFW wardens. Refuge staff and officers will work cooperatively with CDFW wardens to enforce CFR and Refuge-specific regulations to provide a quality experience for all visitors.

The Refuge will not have staffed check-in stations to interact with hunters and no Refuge permit will be required. However, hunters must possess the appropriate State of California hunting licenses and tags prior to entering the Refuge.

Keeping hunters well informed is an important method of control of the hunt area. The following methods will be used to control and enforce hunting regulations:

- The Refuge and hunt area boundaries will be clearly posted in the field to define the hunt area, closed Refuge areas, and adjacent CDFW and BLM lands.
- Maps of the Refuge and hunt area boundaries will be posted at the CDFW kiosk along Otay Lakes Road, close to the commonly used access point for CDFW and the SDNWR hunt unit;
- The Refuge will provide hunting regulations and maps updated annually that show the hunt area;
- Refuge officers will randomly check hunters for compliance with Federal and State Laws, as well as Refuge-specific regulations that restrict hunting to specific targeted species and dates;
- Refuge officers will coordinate with CDFW wardens and other law enforcement agencies; and,
- Information will be made available at the Refuge Complex headquarters, interpretive loop parking lot kiosk, and on the Refuge's website.

E. Funding and Staffing Requirements

Existing funds and staff are currently adequate to offer the hunt program to the public. Staffing activities includes law enforcement, sign posting, updating the website and other materials, holding annual meetings with CDFW and BLM, and responding to public inquiries. There are no hunters' fees associated with hunting on the Refuge and hunting areas will not have blinds to incur additional operations and maintenance needs. It is anticipated that funding would be sufficient to continue the hunting program at the Refuge in the future.

F. Target Species

Hunting will be restricted to these target species: upland game birds (quail, dove), resident small game (rabbit, jackrabbit) and big game (mule deer). While not known to have significant numbers in San Diego County, spotted dove and ringed turtle doves are included in target dove species to be consistent with CDFW regulations. No other upland game birds, resident small game, big game, furbearing mammals or nongame animals may be hunted or trapped. No falconry hunting will be allowed. Consistent with CDFW regulations on their adjoining lands, no collection of reptiles or other fauna will be allowed.

G. Seasons

The California Fish and Game Commission meets to approve hunting seasons and bag limits for the upcoming season in California. The season and bag limits for the Refuge are based on the State's recommendations. However, the number of days the Refuge will be open to hunting is more restrictive than State regulations. Hunting on the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge will be restricted to the period between September 1 and the end of February for quail (archery hunt only; start September 1 instead of

mid-August State start date), Eurasian collared dove and jackrabbit (September 1 to end of February instead of all year), and brush and cottontail rabbits (start September 1 instead of July 1). For the other species, the Refuge hunting dates are the same as established by CDFW during that period. This determination is made by considering the purposes for which the Refuge was established, as well as the need to minimize conflicts with listed endangered and threatened species and their critical habitats. Hunting dates and bag limits for CDFW's seasons can be found on the CDFW hunting regulations website.

Table 1. Game Type, Species, State Hunting Dates, Refuge Hunting Dates, and Daily Bag Limit/Possession Limit. Refuge hunting dates vary from State dates to minimize impacts to listed species; daily bag and possession limits will be consistent with State limits.

Game Type	Species	Refuge Dates	Daily Bag Limit/Possession Limit
Upland Game Bird	Quail	Same as State	10/Triple the daily bag
Upland Game Bird	Quail, Archery Only	Sept. 1 to end date established by State	10/Triple the daily bag
Upland Game Bird	Mourning and White-winged Dove	Same as State	15, up to 10 of which may be White-winged Doves/Triple the daily bag
Upland Game Bird	Spotted and Ringed Turtle Dove	Same as State	No Limit
Upland Game Bird	Eurasian Collared Dove	Sept. 1 to end of Feb.	No Limit
Resident Small Game	Rabbit, Brush and Cottontail	Sept. 1 to end date established by State	5/10
Resident Small Game	Jackrabbit	Sept. 1 to end of Feb.	No Limit
Big Game	Mule Deer, Zone D-16	Same as State	One buck, forked horn or better per tag (See State Regulations for definition)
Big Game	Mule Deer, G-13 Antlerless Deer in San Diego County within Zone D-16	Same as State	One antlerless deer per tag (See State Regulations for definition)
Big Game	Mule Deer, M-6 Muzzleloading rifle, either-sex in San Diego County within Zone D-16	Same as State	One either-sex deer per tag (See State Regulations for definition)
Big Game	Mule Deer, A-22 Archery either-sex in San Diego County within Zone D16	Same as State	One either-sex deer per tag (See State Regulations for definition)

7. CONDUCT OF THE HUNT

A. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

No Refuge-specific hunting regulations have been previously published in the Federal Register for the San Diego Refuge. The following special regulations will be published in the Federal Register and will also be published annually in CDFW's Hunting Regulations under "Federal Regulations."

(q) San Diego National Wildlife Refuge—

(2) Upland game hunting. We allow hunting of quail, mourning and white-winged dove, spotted and ringed turtle dove, and Eurasian-collared dove, brush rabbit, cottontail rabbit, and jackrabbit on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

- (i) Archery hunting of quail is limited to September 1 to the end date established by CDFW.
- (ii) Hunting of brush rabbit and cottontail rabbit is limited to September 1 to the end date established by CDFW.
- (iii) Hunting of Eurasian-collared dove and jackrabbit is limited to September 1 to last day of February.
- (iv) We allow shotguns and archery only. Falconry is prohibited.
- (v) You may not possess more than 25 shot shells while in the field.
- (vi) We allow the use of dogs when hunting upland game.

(3) Big game hunting. We allow hunting of mule deer on designated areas of the refuge.

B. Hunter Application and Registration Procedures

There will not be a Refuge application or registration procedure for hunting on the San Diego NWR. Hunters will be required to have the appropriate CDFW licenses or tags to hunt the specific species, but there will not be additional Refuge-specific registration procedures.

C. Hunter Requirements

(1) State Determined Age Requirement

- Applicants for deer tags must be at least 12 years of age on or before July 1 of the license year for which they are applying or at the time of application if they are applying after July 1. Junior hunters must follow State requirements and those receiving tags must be accompanied by an adult 18 years or older while hunting.

(2) Allowable Equipment

- Method of take including type of firearm or archery equipment and ammunition must be in accordance with CDFW regulations.
- Dogs are required to be kept on a leash, except for hunting dogs engaged in authorized hunting activities and under the immediate control of a licensed hunter (see 50 CFR 26.21(b)).
- All personal property must be removed at the end of each day (see 50 CFR 27.93).

(3) Use of open fires

- Fires are prohibited on the Refuge.

- (4) Licensing and Permits
 - California hunting license and tags are required, and any adult license holder must have any appropriate stamps affixed to their license.
 - No Refuge-issued permits will be required for hunters for the San Diego NWR.
- (5) Reporting harvest
 - Hunters must fill out and appropriately submit required harvest reporting as regulated by CDFW.
- (6) Hunter training and safety
 - Hunters are required to successfully complete a hunter education course in order to purchase a California hunting license.
- (7) Other information
 - Falconry is not allowed.
 - Dog trials are not allowed.

D. Description of Opportunities for Hunters to become Familiar with the Hunt Area

The area where hunting will be permitted is not open to the public year-round; therefore, there shall be no provision for pre-hunt scouting. However, adjacent CDFW and BLM public lands are open and portions of the Refuge hunt area can be seen from there, allowing hunters to observe the general abundance of species that can be hunted. Refuge staff are available and willing to discuss habitat conditions with the public if they have questions. Staff can be contacted by phone or email; the public also can contact the Complex headquarters.

8. Public Engagement

A. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunt and Outreach Efforts

Throughout the CCP process, the Refuge received many comments related to hunting on the Refuge, both opposing and supporting hunting. Most of the hunting community is anticipated to support hunting at this location on the Refuge; however, they will also be disappointed that more areas are not being opened for hunting. They may also be disappointed at the specific regulations limiting the species hunted and hunting seasons. Many public comments on the CCP opposed hunting, and those individuals and organizations are likely to be disappointed that hunting will be allowed at all.

B. Media Selection for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunt

The Refuge will publicize the hunting opportunity on its website and work with the local CDFW land manager to post information on CDFW's kiosk near their entry point in the hunt area. In addition, information about hunting will be in the CDFW hunting website where additional information about current season and bag limits, and other Refuge-specific regulations can be found. The Refuge will also post information on its kiosks in other locations on the Refuge.

9. FUTURE ACTIONS

This Hunt Plan for the San Diego NWR is administered and maintained as described here for the life of the CCP, or until changes in site conditions or other factors warrant a reevaluation of the current program.

10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Hunter use levels, species population trends, and other needs will be evaluated periodically through observations by Refuge and Law Enforcement staff, in coordination with CDFW. Visitor use will be estimated and reported in the Refuge management data system.

11. APPENDICES TO THE HUNT PLAN

An opening package is required since this area of the Refuge is currently closed.

The following documents can be found in the San Diego NWR CCP:

- Compatibility Determination (Appendix C-1 of the CCP)
- Finding of No Significant Impact and accompanying NEPA documentation for the San Diego NWR CCP (Appendix F)
- Intra-Service Endangered Species Act Section 7 Biological Evaluation Form for the San Diego NWR CCP (F-6 of Appendix F)

12. LITERATURE CITED

County of San Diego. 1998. Final Multiple Species Conservation Program; MSCP Plan. 278 pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 1997. Environmental Assessment and Land Protection Plan. Otay-Sweetwater Unit, San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, San Diego County, California.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2017. Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the San Diego National Wildlife Refuge, San Diego County, California.