

**Hunting Plan for
Unit 12 of the Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge**

July 2020

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge
961 E Minidoka Dam Road
Rupert, ID 83350**

Submitted By:
Project Leader

Signature

Date

Concurrence:

Refuge
Supervisor

Signature

Date

Approved:

Regional Chief,
National Wildlife
Refuge System

Signature

Date

This page intentionally left blank

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	4
II.	Statement of Objectives	6
III.	Description of Hunting Program	6
	A. Areas to be Opened to Hunting.....	6
	B. Species to be Taken, Hunting Periods, Hunting Access.....	8
	C. Hunter Permit Requirements.....	8
	D. Consultation and Coordination with the State.....	9
	E. Law Enforcement.....	9
	F. Funding and Staffing Requirements.....	10
IV.	Conduct of the Hunt Program	10
	A. Hunter Permit Application, Selection, and/or Registration Procedures.....	10
	B. Refuge-Specific Regulations.....	10
	C. Relevant State Regulations.....	11
	D. Other Rules and Regulations for Hunters.....	13
V.	Public Engagement	14
	A. Outreach Plan for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunt.....	14
	B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunting Program.....	14
	C. How the Public will be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations.....	15
VI.	Compatibility Determinations	15
	List of Maps	7
	Map A. Unit 12 of Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge.....	7

HUNTING PLAN for UNIT 12 of the MINIDOKA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

I. Introduction

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

Minidoka Wildlife Refuge was established in 1909 by President Theodore Roosevelt under Executive Order (E.O.) 1032. The Refuge was then modified by four subsequent E.O.s by President William H. Taft (E.O. 1486) on February 21, 1912; by President Herbert Hoover (E.O. 5375) on June 23, 1930; and President Franklin D. Roosevelt (E.O. 7417) on July 17, 1936. Executive Order 7417 supersedes, through revocation, the three previous E.O.s. In 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed his second E.O. for Minidoka, E.O. 8600, changing the name of the Refuge from “Minidoka Wildlife Refuge” to “Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge” (NWR, Refuge) and adding 360 acres (withdrawn for reclamation purposes) to the Refuge boundary. The Refuge boundary has not been expanded since President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued E.O. 8600.

The Refuge purpose is derived from Executive Order 7417:

“. . . as a refuge and breeding ground for birds and other wildlife” (*E.O. 7417 – Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 17, 1936*).

Minidoka NWR is located on the Snake River Plain in south-central Idaho, 12 miles northeast of Rupert in Minidoka, Blaine, Cassia, and Power Counties. The primary feature of the Refuge is Lake Walcott, the reservoir formed by the construction of the Minidoka Dam in 1906. The Refuge includes 80 miles of shoreline around Lake Walcott, from Minidoka Dam upstream about 25 miles. The Refuge encompasses a total of 20,752 acres. Most of the Refuge (17,923 acres) represents a secondary withdrawal encompassing Lake Walcott and surrounding lands. The primary withdrawal is controlled by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and managed primarily for irrigation purposes (Minidoka Project). The Minidoka Dam, power plant, irrigation canals, and Lake Walcott water levels are all managed by BOR. Service management of public use on overlay Refuge lands, where the Service has secondary jurisdiction, is governed by a Cooperative Agreement with BOR (1964, amended 1976). Minidoka NWR is one of a handful of refuges with a state park on Refuge-controlled lands: Lake Walcott State Park. The park (originally “Walcott Park”) was managed by the BOR for much of its history. In 1996 the Idaho Legislature authorized the Idaho Park Board to enter into an agreement with the BOR for the operation of recreational facilities at Lake Walcott, which became known as Lake Walcott State Park. The park provides the public with picnic, camping, and boat launch facilities.

About half of the Refuge (11,300 acres) are the open waters of Lake Walcott, the Snake River, and some small marsh areas. Uplands surrounding the lake are primarily sagebrush-steppe (approximately 3,500 acres) and grasslands (approximately 5,900 acres). The Refuge is surrounded primarily by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands; however, in certain areas, including the portion of the Refuge south of Lake Walcott and east of the Raft River, and Unit 12, private lands lie adjacent to the Refuge boundary.

Areas of high quality submergent aquatic vegetation (SAV) occur on the eastern side of the Refuge, which is closed to boating. This is a locally important molting area for geese and ducks. Tens of thousands of ducks and geese use this portion of the Refuge as a safe haven during this flightless period (early July through September). Historically, peak populations of 100,000 molting waterfowl have been recorded, but recent highs have been about half that number. The SAV beds are important nesting sites for western and Clark's grebes, one of only three nesting sites for both species in Idaho. Several islands on the Refuge provide habitat for colonial nesting birds, including gulls, black-crowned night-herons, egrets, and one of only three nesting colonies of American white pelicans in the state of Idaho.

The mission of the NWRS, as outlined by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act (NWRSA), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act (16 U.S.C. 668dd et seq.), is to:

"... 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 NWRSA mandates the Secretary of the Interior in administering the System to (16 U.S.C. 668dd(a)(4):

- Provide for the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants, and their habitats within the NWRS;
- Ensure that the biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health of the NWRS are maintained for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans;
- Ensure that the mission of the NWRS 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 NWRS are located;
- Assist in the maintenance of adequate water quantity and water quality to fulfill the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of each refuge;
- Recognize, compatible wildlife-dependent, recreational uses as the priority general public uses of the NWRS through which the American public can develop an appreciation for fish and wildlife;
- Ensure that opportunities are provided within the NWRS 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 recreational opportunities, including hunting and fishing, when those opportunities are compatible with the purposes for which the refuge was established and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Refuge was opened to waterfowl and upland game bird (pheasant and partridge) hunting in 1965. The Refuge currently has two designated hunting areas: one on the south side of Lake Walcott and one on the eastern end of the Refuge around Tule Island. These areas are currently open to the hunting of migratory birds (duck, goose, coot, and snipe) and upland game (pheasant, partridge, and cottontail rabbit) in accordance with state seasons and regulations. Hunting of upland game may occur on the Refuge only if the Idaho season for those species is open concurrently with the waterfowl season. The Refuge is currently closed to all hunting once the Idaho waterfowl season is closed. In 2019, a portion of the Refuge's East Hunt Unit, which was already open to migratory bird and upland game hunting, was opened to big game (elk) hunting. We propose to open Unit 12 to hunting of select migratory bird, big game, upland game, and furbearer species in accordance with IDFG seasons and regulations.

II. Statement of Objectives

The objectives of a hunting program on Minidoka NWR are:

- To provide compatible wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities as mandated by and according to Service law and policy; and
- To provide additional hunting opportunities and greater alignment with the state as mandated by Secretarial Orders Number 3347 and 3356.

III. Description of Hunting Program

A. Areas to be Opened to Hunting

Hunting for select migratory bird, big game, upland game, and furbearer species would occur on the Refuge's Unit 12 (also known as the Lake Channel unit). Unit 12 comprises approximately 362 acres and is a disjunct unit of the Refuge, approximately one mile north of the Snake River, and 1.75 miles northeast of the Refuge's East Hunt Area. The unit contains sagebrush-steppe, scattered junipers, and 94 acres of seasonal wetlands, including both emergent wetland and the only true wet meadow habitat on the Refuge (National Wetlands Inventory data).



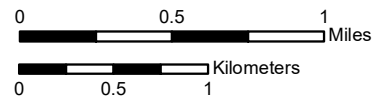
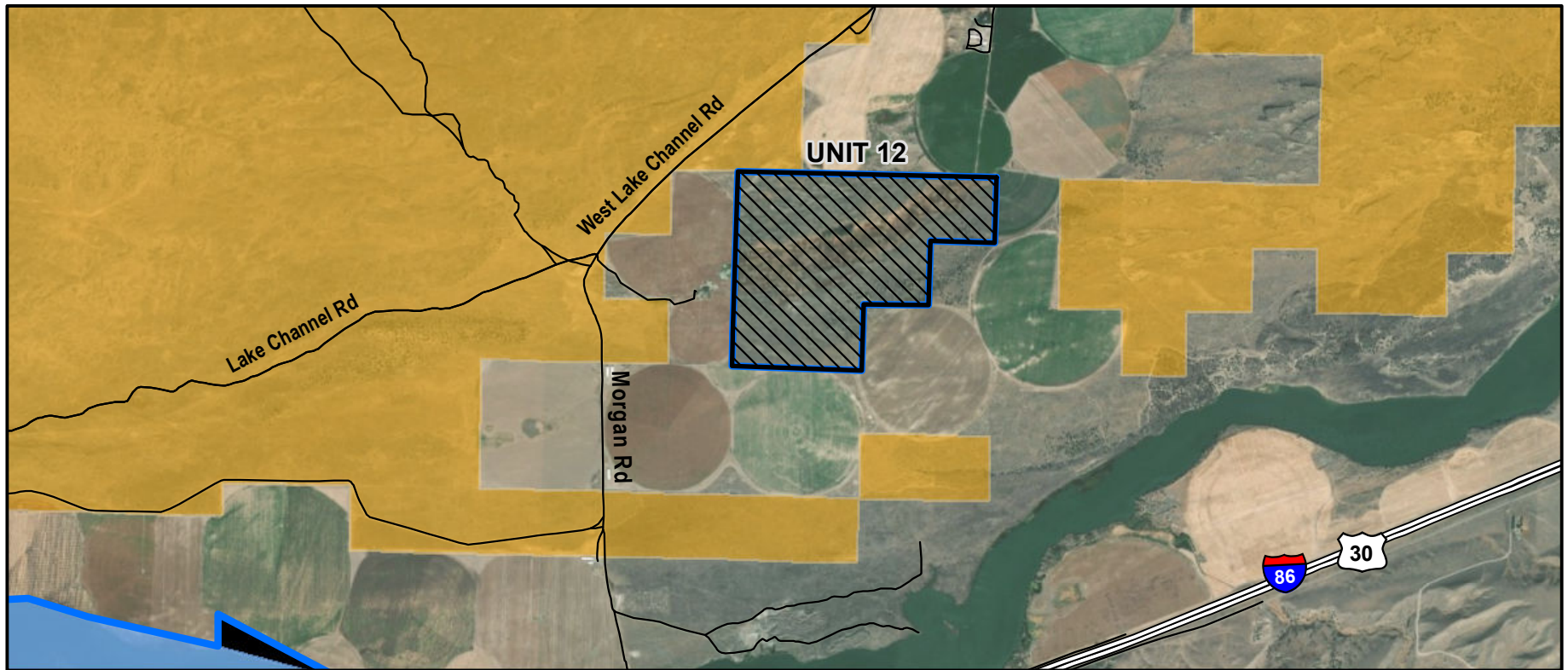
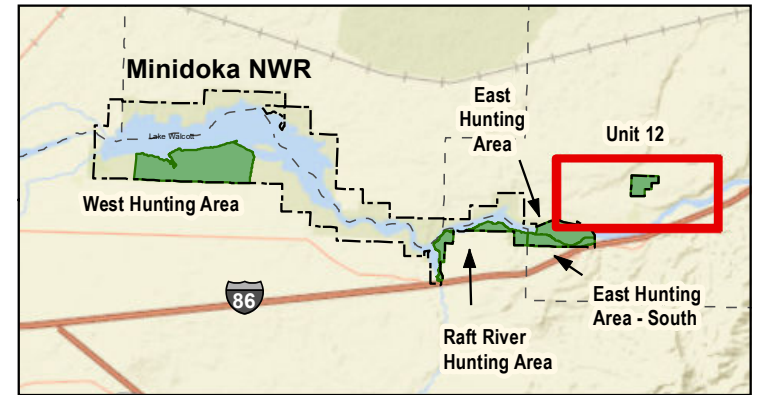
Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge - Unit 12

Approved Refuge Boundary

Open to mule deer, elk, upland game bird, and small game hunting under State seasons and regulations*

Bureau of Land Management

*Subject to additional restrictions under Refuge specific regulations. Hunters must obtain permission to cross private lands to access Refuge hunt areas.



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

Unit 12 of the Refuge would be closed to all hunting from April 1st through August 15th to provide habitat for migrating and breeding songbirds, waterfowl, waterbirds and shorebirds, landbirds (including sagebrush-obligate species), and other wildlife. The unit would be open to hunting from August 16th through March 31st in accordance with IDFG regulations for the species listed below.

BIG GAME HUNTING: Hunting for elk and mule deer would occur on Unit 12 as prescribed by Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG) during the Idaho general and controlled hunt seasons for Unit 68 in the Big Desert Zone.

UPLAND BIRD HUNTING: Hunting for gray partridge, sage-grouse, and ring-necked pheasant, chukar, and sage-grouse would occur on Unit 12 as prescribed by Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG).

MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING: Hunting for duck, coot, light geese, dark geese, snipe, mourning dove, and crow would occur on Unit 12 as prescribed by Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG).

SMALL GAME AND FURBEARER HUNTING: Hunting for cottontail rabbit and bobcat would occur on Unit 12 as prescribed by Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG).

Access to Unit 12 would be via the West Lake Channel Road. The northwest corner of Unit 12 may be accessed on foot via adjacent BLM lands. All other areas require access through private land (landowner permission) before reaching the Refuge. Hunters will self-navigate to their location on foot; vehicles are prohibited off-road. Entry times for Unit 12 are from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.

C. Hunter Permit Requirements

Hunters must comply with all applicable IDFG regulations and must obtain all necessary state licenses, tags, or permits for each season. No Refuge permit is required.

Under current State regulations, deer and elk hunters must carry a valid Idaho hunting license with archery or muzzleloader permit validation if these weapons are used. To pursue doves, ducks, geese, coots, sandhill cranes or Wilson's snipe, hunters must purchase a hunting license and Migratory Bird (HIP) permit. Hunters sixteen years or older also need a federal duck stamp for ducks, geese and coots. To hunt sage-grouse and/or sharp-tailed grouse, hunters must purchase a hunting license and a Sage/Sharp-tailed grouse permit. A hunting license is required to hunt pheasants. Hunters who pursue partridge, rabbit, and crows must purchase a hunting license. No special permits are required. A hunting license is required to practice falconry in Idaho. Falconers must also obtain proper state and federal permits for training and possessing a

bird of prey. Nonresident falconers must have a valid Idaho hunting license, all necessary validation and a valid falconry permit from their state of residence.

D. Consultation and Coordination with the State

In 2018, Refuge staff reviewed Idaho state hunting framework and regulations to find consistency where possible. IDFG's recommendations were used as the foundation for this hunt plan and the proposed alternative in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the hunt plan. On July 23, 2019, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regional senior staff, including the Assistant Regional Director-Refuges and SE Idaho NWR Complex Project Leader Tracy Casselman, had a hunting and fishing coordination meeting with the IDFG's leadership team. IDFG leadership present at the coordination meeting included the Director, Deputy Director, Wildlife Chief, Fisheries Chief, Region Manager, support staff, and an Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Governmental Affairs representative. The IDFG leadership team outlined the State's priorities, and the Service and IDFG came to mutual agreement on phasing of hunting and fishing openings and expansions on Idaho National Wildlife Refuges, including opening Unit 12 of Minidoka NWR to big game, upland game, and migratory bird hunting in 2020. Refuge staff contacted the IDFG Region 5 (Southeast) office letting them know that the Service is proposing to open Unit 12 of the Refuge to hunting. IDFG was given an advance copy of the Draft Hunt Plan and EA and were invited to provide comments, prior to issuance of the Draft Hunt Plan and EA for public comment. We incorporated their comments into these documents.

Minidoka NWR and the IDFG will continue to work together to ensure safe and enjoyable recreational hunting opportunities. Hunter participation and harvest data are collected by the state, and law enforcement officers from both the SE Idaho NWR Complex and IDFG work together to patrol the Refuge, safeguarding hunters, visitors, and both game and nongame species.

E. Law Enforcement

Enforcement of Refuge violations normally associated with management of a national wildlife refuge is the responsibility of commissioned Federal Wildlife Officers (FWOs). The SE Idaho Complex currently has one FWO. Other officers, special agents, state game wardens, and the local Sheriff's Department often assist the Southeast Idaho National Wildlife Refuge Complex's full time federal wildlife officers.

The following methods are used to control and enforce hunting regulations:

- Refuge and hunt area boundaries will be clearly posted;
- The Refuge will provide a hunting brochure that shows hunt areas; and
- Southeast Idaho National Wildlife Refuge Complex law enforcement staff will randomly check hunters for compliance with federal and state Laws.

F. Funding and Staffing Requirements

The Refuge is administered by the Southeast Idaho National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex), which also administers the Deer Flat, Camas, Bear Lake, and Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuges. Only the Refuge Manager and Wildlife Biologist are stationed at Minidoka NWR; they are responsible for day-to-day operations. Personnel stationed at Complex headquarters, located in Chubbuck, Idaho, provides support to Minidoka NWR and other refuges in the Complex. The distance of the Refuge to shared staff can present logistical challenges. However, they can be overcome by incorporating the management of the Unit 12 hunts into existing hunt programs currently in place within the Complex.

Given that the proposed hunts would fall within the state hunting framework which is managed by IDFG, the proposed hunts would require relatively little oversight from Refuge staff. Estimated costs to implement the hunt would be approximately \$4,000.00 annually to cover staff time needed to consult and coordinate with the state and to cover costs of additional law enforcement patrols to enforce hunting regulations, and \$15,000 in one-time costs for fence repairs, installation of a new gate, new brochures and signs. There are currently enough funds in Refuge operations to implement this program.

IV. Conduct of the Hunting Program

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

Hunting of deer, elk, migratory birds, upland game, and furbearer species listed above is permitted in accordance with all state regulations (see section IV. C. below). No Refuge permit is required at this time.

B. Refuge-Specific Hunting Regulations

Listed below are Refuge-specific regulations (50 CFR 32.31) that pertain to hunting on Minidoka NWR as of the date of this plan, and proposed changes to regulations as a result of the new Unit 12 hunts as proposed in this plan. These regulations may be modified as conditions change or if Refuge expansion occurs.

Current Hunting Regulations:

(f) Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge.

(1) *Migratory game bird hunting.* We allow hunting of duck, goose, coot, and snipe on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) We allow only hunters and dogs to retrieve game in designated hunting areas.

(ii) You may only use portable blinds or construct temporary blinds of dead natural vegetation.

Blinds will be available for general use on a first-come, first-served basis. You must remove portable blinds at the end of each day's hunt (see §27.93 of this chapter). We prohibit use of rock piles above the high-water mark for blind construction.

- (iii) On West Hunting Area (Lake Walcott), we allow hunting on the uplands and over water within 100 yards (90 meters) of the shoreline. We allow use of boats only for retrieval of game.
- (iv) On East Hunting Area (Tule Island), we allow boats during the waterfowl hunting season.

(2) *Upland game hunting.* We allow hunting of pheasant, grouse, partridge, and cottontail rabbit on designated areas of the refuge.

(3) *Big game hunting.* We allow hunting elk on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following condition: Elk hunters may enter the hunt area from 1 and ½ hours before legal hunting time to 1 and ½ hours after legal hunting time.

Proposed Changes to the Hunt Regulations:

(f) Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge.

(1) *Migratory game bird hunting.* We allow hunting of duck, goose, coot, snipe, dove, and crow on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following conditions:

(i) We allow only hunters and dogs to retrieve game in designated hunting areas.

(ii) You may only use portable blinds or construct temporary blinds of dead natural vegetation. Blinds will be available for general use on a first-come, first-served basis. You must remove portable blinds at the end of each day's hunt (see §27.93 of this chapter). We prohibit use of rock piles above the high-water mark for blind construction.

(iii) On West Hunting Area (Lake Walcott), we allow hunting on the uplands and over water within 100 yards (90 meters) of the shoreline. We allow use of boats only for retrieval of game.

(iv) On East Hunting Area (Tule Island), we allow boats during the waterfowl hunting season.

(2) *Upland game hunting.* We allow hunting of pheasant, grouse, partridge (chukar and gray partridge), cottontail rabbit, and bobcat on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following condition: Condition (f)(1)(i) applies.

(3) *Big game hunting.* We allow hunting of deer and elk on designated areas of the refuge subject to the following condition: Deer and elk hunters may enter the hunt area from 1 and ½ hours before legal hunting time to 1 and ½ hours after legal hunting time.

C. Relevant State Regulations

- **Idaho Big Game Seasons and Rules** (For complete rules see <https://idfg.idaho.gov/sites/default/files/seasons-rules-big-game-2019-2020.pdf>)

Hunting Hours

Big game animals may be hunted only from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Mandatory Report Requirements

All deer, elk, and pronghorn hunters are required to complete a Mandatory Hunter

Report for each tag they purchase. Hunters are required to submit a report by phone or internet within 10 days after harvest. Hunters who do not harvest, or did not hunt with their tag, are required to report within 10 days after the close of the hunting season.

Muzzleloader Only Season

Any person hunting in a “muzzleloader” only season, including controlled hunts, must have their license with muzzleloader permit validation.

Archery Only Season

Any person hunting in an archery-only season, including controlled hunts, must have in their possession their license with archery permit validation. During an archery-only season, it is illegal for hunters to use any firearm or implement other than a longbow, compound bow, or recurve bow in compliance with general archery equipment requirements or:

- Any bow equipped with magnifying sights.
- Any device that holds a bow at partial or full draw. **Except** hunters possessing a disabled archery permit may use a device that holds a bow at partial or full draw. Applications for the use of devices holding a bow at partial or full draw by disabled hunters are available at Fish and Game offices.
- Any crossbow. **Except** disabled hunters possessing a permit may use a crossbow. Applications for the use of crossbows by disabled hunters are available at Fish and Game offices.

- **Idaho Migratory Game Bird Seasons and Rules** (For complete rules see <https://idfg.idaho.gov/sites/default/files/seasons-rules-migratory-game-bird-2019-2020.pdf>)

License and Permit Requirements: To pursue doves, ducks, geese, coots, sandhill cranes or Wilson's snipe, hunters must purchase a hunting license and Migratory Bird (HIP) permit. Hunters 16 years or older also need a federal duck stamp for ducks, geese and coots.

Shooting Hours

Official shooting hours for migratory game birds (except crows) are from ½ hour before sunset until sunset. No person shall take American crows: from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise.

- **Idaho Upland Game, Furbearer and Turkey Seasons and Rules** (For complete rules see <https://idfg.idaho.gov/sites/default/files/seasons-rules-upland-2018-2019.pdf>)

License and Permit Requirements: A hunting license is required to hunt pheasants. Hunters who pursue quail, partridge, forest grouse, rabbit, hare, crows, predators and

unprotected species must purchase a hunting license. No special permits are required. Any person hunting sage- or sharp-tailed grouse must have in possession their hunting license with a sage/sharp-tailed grouse permit validation.

Falconry: All Idaho residents hunting by falconry must have in their possession a valid Idaho falconry permit, a valid hunting license and all necessary validations. All nonresidents hunting by falconry must have in their possession a valid Idaho hunting license, all necessary validations and a valid falconry permit from their state of residence.

Shooting Hours: Upland game birds: From one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Upland game animals: No person shall take upland game animals from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise.

Mandatory Report Requirements

Bobcat Mandatory Check and Report: Any person taking bobcat whether by hunting or trapping must comply with the mandatory check and report and pelt tag requirements by: Presenting the pelts of all bobcat taken to a regional office, the McCall office or official check point to obtain the appropriate pelt tag and complete a harvest report.

D. Other Refuge Rules and Regulations for Hunting

Information for Minidoka NWR hunting is listed below and/or can be downloaded from the Minidoka NWR website:

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Minidoka/visit/rules_and_regulations.html

- **Ammunition:** Approved nontoxic shot is required for hunting all species.
- **Retrieving:** Hunters or their dogs may retrieve downed game only within designated hunting areas. Hunters are not allowed to enter closed areas to retrieve game. Birds are considered to be within the refuge until they cross over the boundary.
- **Hunting Blinds:** You may only use portable blinds or construct temporary blinds of dead natural vegetation. Blinds will be available for general use on a first-come, first-served basis. You must remove portable blinds at the end of each day's hunt. We prohibit use of rock piles above the high-water mark for blind construction. Digging pit blinds, and use of live or standing vegetation is prohibited.
- On West Hunting Area (Lake Walcott), we allow hunting on the uplands and over water within 100 yards (90 meters) of the shoreline. We allow use of boats only to set/recover decoys and retrieve downed birds; they are not allowed for hunting from, nor can they be used to access any of the islands within this hunting unit. Hunting from the islands within this unit is prohibited.

- On East Hunting Area (Tule Island), we allow boats during the waterfowl hunting season. Boats are allowed for use to set decoys, retrieve downed birds, access Tule Island, and to hunt from within this unit.
- Off-road travel by vehicles, ATVs/UTVs, and horses is prohibited;
- Boating, in areas closed to boating, is prohibited (see Refuge public use map at <http://cmsstage.fws.doi.net/uploadedFiles/Minidoka%20Map.pdf#a>)
- The Tule Island Access Road is open to vehicles only during the state elk and waterfowl hunting seasons; foot travel is permitted year-round;
- The Bird Island Road Road closed to vehicles January 15 to September 20; foot travel permitted.
- Camping is prohibited on the Refuge, except in Lake Walcott State Park;
- Open fires and fireworks are not allowed at any time;
- Firearms may only be discharged in accordance with Refuge hunting regulations, i.e., only during the lawful pursuit of game during legal seasons;
- Personal property, including portable blinds and tree stands, must be removed from the Refuge at the end of each day; and
- Cutting of live vegetation for blinds is prohibited. Collecting natural objects such as plants, animals, minerals, antlers, and feathers, and objects of antiquity (including Native American artifacts, such as arrowheads) is prohibited.

V. Public Engagement

A. Outreach for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunting Program

The SE Idaho Refuge Complex maintains a mailing list, for news release purposes, to local newspapers, radio, and websites. Special announcements and articles may be released in conjunction with hunting seasons. In addition, information about the hunt will be available at the SE Idaho NWR Complex office, the Minidoka NWR headquarters, and on the Minidoka NWR website www.fws.gov/refuge/Minidoka/.

B. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunting Program

Waterfowl and upland game hunting is already established at Minidoka NWR. Most of the Refuge is surrounded by BLM lands where hunting under state regulations is currently allowed. Unit 12 is bordered by BLM lands on its northwest corner, however, private farms and ranches surround most of the unit. The Refuge's Unit 12 lies within Idaho's Game Management Unit (GMU) 68 of the Big Desert Zone. The State's management direction for the Big Desert Zone is to reduce elk populations to lower levels to reduce private property depredation. However, in units of the Big Desert Zone where agricultural concerns are now at manageable levels - such as in much of Unit 68 - elk numbers will be maintained at levels which limit agricultural damage yet provide a desirable hunting opportunity and experience. Local sentiment is generally in favor of reducing elk numbers in this area. Big game hunting (for deer, elk, and pronghorn) and hunting for other species (e.g. upland birds and small game) occurs on BLM lands adjacent to the Refuge, including Unit 12, and is generally accepted locally and does not typically generate anti-

hunting controversy. We also anticipate favorable reaction to the addition of Unit 12 to the Refuge's hunt program. It would provide more consistency with hunting that is already occurring on adjacent BLM lands. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes oppose expanding hunting opportunities on the Refuge due to concern over looting and vandalism of cultural resources.

Nationally, there is a component of the population that is opposed to hunting, and some organizations are opposed to hunting, or at least the expansion of hunting, on national wildlife refuges and other public lands. However, we feel confident that hunting on Unit 12 of Minidoka NWR will be supported by the local community.

C. How Hunters Will Be Informed of Relevant Rules and Regulations

General information regarding hunting, regulations, maps, and other wildlife-dependent public uses can be obtained at the SE Idaho NWR Complex Headquarters at 4425 Burley Drive Suite A, Chubbuck, Idaho 83202 or by calling 208-237-6615 or the Minidoka NWR Headquarters 961 E Minidoka Dam Road, Rupert, Idaho 83350 or by calling (208) 436-3589. Hunting regulations and maps are also available on the Minidoka NWR website: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/minidoka/>. Staff fills brochure boxes located on Minidoka NWR.

IDFG hunting information is available at the office located at 324 417 E #1, Jerome, ID 83338 or by calling (208) 324-4359. Hunting resources are also available on their website at: <https://idfg.idaho.gov/hunt>.

VI. Compatibility Determination

Hunting and all associated program activities proposed in this plan are compatible with the purposes of the Refuge. See attached Compatibility Determinations for Big Game Hunting and for Migratory Bird and Upland Game Hunting, Minidoka NWR.