Module 2e
National Wildlife Refuges & Public Lands
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The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages an unparalleled network of public lands and waters called the National Wildlife Refuge System.

National Wildlife Refuges use Compatibility to determine if a public use is appropriate to occur.
National Wildlife Refuge System Hierarchy

The President of the United States
President Joseph Biden

Department of Interior
Secretary: Deb Haaland

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Director: Martha Williams

National Wildlife Refuge System
Chief: Cynthia Martinez
National Wildlife Refuge System

Mission Statement

“The mission of the System is to administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generation of Americans.”
There are more than 560 National Wildlife Refuges spanning the country, at least one in every state and U.S. Territory.

Click here to learn more about Public Lands
Region 1 also known as the "North Atlantic–Appalachian Region" consists of 14 states. Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

The Regional Office is located in Hadley, Massachusetts.
A Compatibility Determination or "CD" is a written determination signed by the Refuge Manager and Regional Chief signifying that a proposed or existing use of a national wildlife refuge is or is not a compatible use.

All public uses must be compatible with the purpose for which the refuge was established.

Click here to learn more about Compatibility Determination
Public Uses

Most refuges offer one or more of the "Big Six" priority uses.

- Interpretation
- Wildlife Observation
- Photography
- Hunting
- Environmental Education
- Fishing

Six Wildlife Dependent Public Uses

A compatible use is a proposed or existing wildlife-dependent recreational use or any other use of a national wildlife refuge that, based on sound professional judgment, will not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the National Wildlife Refuge System mission or the purposes of the national wildlife refuge.