Environmental Assessment
Buffalo Ridge Refuge Land Exchange
Humphreys County TN

Prepared by Tim White, Wildlife Biologist 3
Federal Aid and Real Estate Division
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA)
May 19, 2020
Environmental Assessment
Buffalo Ridge Refuge Land Swap
Humphreys County TN

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Purpose and Need

Purpose of action
The TWRA is proposing to remove the Federal nexus from approximately 3.46 acres and assign the federal nexus to a similar tract of land with similar value.

Need for taking action
The TWRA law enforcement division has a desire to establish a training site on a piece of property at Buffalo Ridge Refuge. Because this property was purchased with wildlife restoration money, we need to remove the federal nexus from that portion in order to prevent a diversion situation.

Decision to be made by the responsible official
The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is to decide whether this project is eligible to have the Federal nexus removed and transferred to a similar identified piece of property.

Issues raised during project planning or public scoping
No issues have been identified during the planning phase. This property has been purchased and is being used for hunting, hunter education training and for hunter development programs. The portion that will be removed is at a corner of the property and poses no unique value that will not be replaced when we assign a federal nexus to a replacement piece of land.

Alternatives
In order to provide a law enforcement training area at Buffalo Ridge and to prevent a diversion of funds, we plan to remove the federal nexus from 3.46 acres and assign it to a similar piece of property.

Alternative C. – No Action
TWRA will not remove the federal nexus from this property and assign it to another piece of land nearby. This alternative would not address the Agency’s need for a Law Enforcement training center.

Affected Environment
The land is currently owned by TWRA. The property is not in a floodplain and does not adjoin a national park or federal refuge. The USFWS Ecological Services office in Cookeville, TN has evaluated the entire Buffalo Ridge property for compliance under Section 7 of the Endangered
Species Act and has concluded that there are no critical habitats on the property. The site does not contain or adjoin any ecologically critical areas and there are no cultural resources on the site. The Tennessee Historical Commission determined there were no national register of historic places listed on the project’s property. Because endangered or threatened bat habitats will not be disturbed or affected, the Fish and Wildlife Service concurs with the determination that the project is not likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species.

Location
The Buffalo Ridge Refuge is located in Humphreys County, Tennessee. The address for the property is 2040 Cuba Landing Road, Waverly, Tennessee 37185. The tract consists of approximately 3.46 acres located approximately a mile south and west of exit 143 of I-40. Figure 1.

Physical Environment Landscape
The proposed land swap consists of two pieces of property with similar ecological value.

Soils and Topography
Soils in the area consist primarily of Humphreys silt loam, Lindside silt loam, (Figure 2). There are no rocky outcrops or slopes in the affected area. A custom soil report was created from the Web Soil Survey listed in the Appendix. Soil Survey Staff, Natural Resources Conservation Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Web Soil Survey Available online https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx Accessed June 12, 2019.

Air Quality
The closest air quality monitored by the EPA is in Fairview, TN. The Fairview site is located in Williamson County, Tennessee and currently supports monitoring for ozone. This site is located southwest of Nashville and northwest of Franklin, Tennessee. This site is upwind from the core Nashville MSA area. Ozone monitoring began on 10/30/2001 and this site is used by the ozone AQI forecasting. 2016 air quality data for included 245 days of monitoring with the air quality index in the good range for 212 days, 32 days of moderate air quality. One day was recorded in the unhealthy for sensitive groups range. The 2018 EPA Air Quality Index Report is located at: https://www.epa.gov/outdoor-air-quality-data/air-quality-index-report

Water Resources
The property that will be removed is an upland site adjacent to a State highway. There are no wetlands on the site. The wetlands were determined from the National Wetland Index (Figure 3). A site visit was made on October 22, 2019 to survey the site. During the visit, soil samples were taken and plants were surveyed to determine if there were any hydric soils or wetland plants. Neither was found within the project area. There were also no hydrology issues that would have indicated a wetland was present. The determination is that there are no jurisdictional wetlands located within the proposed areas designated for the project. There are PF01A classified wetlands on the main property but not within the proposed project area. These are palustrine forested wetlands that have surface water present from a few days to a few weeks during the growing season. However, the water table lies well below the ground surface for most of the season and these areas are not in the proposed area. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) maps showed no floodplains in the proposed area.
Wildlife
There are potentially three federally listed species on the property: Gray Bat (*Myotis grisescens*); Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*); and Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*). This proposed project is an open fescue pasture.

Slabside Pearlymussels (*Pleuronaia dolabelloides*) is found within the adjacent Buffalo River but is not located on the property or within the proposed project area.

A Section 7 form was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for a project that encompassed the entire Buffalo Ridge Refuge including this 3.46 acre section of this project property. On July 18, 2019 a determination was made that the project is not likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species. No other threatened or endangered species were documented within a mile of the project area. (USFWS Section 7 concurrence: Appendix 1). The Section 7 covers a larger project and originally included this site. Since this site will be carved out of the original proposed project, the section 7 is valid for this small piece as well.

Archaeological, Historical and Cultural Resources
An archaeological study was conducted by TRC Environmental, Inc. in April 2019. Based on the data collected during this Phase I archaeological investigation, TRC recommends that no sites are eligible for the NRHP as they are not able to provide additional information on the prehistory of the area. No known archaeological, historical or cultural resources occur in the project area. Furthermore, TRC agrees that there are no effects to archaeological resources and no further archaeological work is recommended. A letter from the Tennessee Historical Commission, dated April 22, 2019 agreed with the archaeology study that no archaeological resources eligible for listing in the NRHP will be affected by this project (Appendix 2). This meets the requirement of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The USFWS initiated a Tribal Consultation on the larger Buffalo Ridge Project and no issues were raised regarding archaeological resources.

Hazardous and Toxic Materials
No hazardous or toxic materials are associated with this site.

Compliance, Consultation, Coordination
- TWRA has completed all required compliance regarding this project on the Buffalo Ridge Refuge. This proposed project will benefit that Agency by providing a much needed training site for Conservation Officers.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued an Endangered Species Act Section 7 approval for the proposed project area (Appendix 2).
- The State Historic Preservation Office has issued a response verifying there are no national register of historic places listed or eligible properties affected by this undertaking.
- No jurisdictional wetlands occur within the proposed project area and will not be affected by the project.
- A NEPA compliance form was filled out for the project. (Appendix 3).
- An archaeology study was conducted for the property and no issues were found. The USFWS office in Atlanta initiated a Tribal Consult which yielded concurrence by the constituent tribes that there are no significant archaeological concerns.
## Summary of Impacts by Alternative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact Topics</th>
<th>Alternative A</th>
<th>Alternative B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preferred Action Remove Federal Nexus at Buffalo Ridge Refuge.</td>
<td>No Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Environment</strong></td>
<td>No Impact</td>
<td>No Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water Resources</strong></td>
<td>Forested Wetlands located on the property but not within the project area will be unaffected.</td>
<td>No Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wildlife</strong></td>
<td>Negligible impact to wildlife habitat, no impact to air or water.</td>
<td>No Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special Status Species</strong></td>
<td>Section 7 consultation concurs with a “not likely to adversely affect” determination.</td>
<td>No Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hunting</strong></td>
<td>No Impact</td>
<td>No Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Resources</strong></td>
<td>No Impact</td>
<td>No Impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Map of Buffalo Ridge Refuge Proposed Removal of Federal Nexus.
Figure 2. Soils Map For Buffalo Ridge Refuge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map Unit Symbol</th>
<th>Map Unit Name</th>
<th>Acres in AOI</th>
<th>Percent of AOI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bc</td>
<td>Bodine gravelly silt loam, 12 to 20 percent slopes</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bcz</td>
<td>Bodine gravelly silt loam, 20 to 40 percent slopes</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ef</td>
<td>Ennis fine sandy loam</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>En</td>
<td>Ennis silt loam</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nq</td>
<td>Humphreys gravelly silt loam, 2 to 5 percent slopes</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hn</td>
<td>Humphreys silt loam</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li</td>
<td>Undevel silt loam</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mt</td>
<td>Merwin silt loam</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pf</td>
<td>Pope fine sandy loam</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ps</td>
<td>Paden silt loam</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psr</td>
<td>Paden silt loam, eroded</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pex</td>
<td>Paden silt loam, slope</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for Area of Interest</td>
<td></td>
<td>214.4</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3. Map of Wetlands Located on Buffalo Ridge Refuge.
Appendix 1

United States Department of the Interior
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Tennessee ES Office
446 Neal Street
Cookeville, Tennessee 38501

July 18, 2019

Mr. Timothy Churchill
Federal Aid and Real Estate Division
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
P. O. Box 40747
Nashville, Tennessee 37204


Dear Mr. Churchill:

Tennessee Ecological Services Field Office personnel of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have reviewed the information submitted regarding proposed construction of a hunter education training facility and shooting ranges at Buffalo Ridge Refuge in Humphreys County, Tennessee, pursuant to Endangered Species Act section 7 regulations. A copy of the signed Intra-Service Section 7 evaluation form is enclosed. We have reviewed the information submitted and based on the avoidance of suitable roost habitat, we concur with your determination that actions associated with project are not likely to adversely affect for the Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, or gray bat. We also concur with your no effect determination for the orangefoot pimpleback, pink mucket, ring pink, and slabside pearlymussel. Accordingly, we support the proposal and there is no further need for interagency consultation with our office from regulatory agencies pursuant to the requirements of section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

The biological evaluation form has been signed by Tennessee Ecological Services Field Office personnel. If you have any questions or need additional information about our position, please contact me at 931/525-4979. I can be reached via email at robbie.sykes@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Sykes
Acting Field Supervisor
IX. Reviewing ES Field Station:

A. Concurrence  √  Nonconcurrence ______

B. Remarks (attach additional pages as needed):

[Signature]  2/8/19
signature  date
[Supervisor's Name]  JNES Office
title  office

X. Reviewing Division of Federal Aid Staff Evaluation:

A. Concurrence ______  Nonconcurrence ______

B. ESA Section 7 Coordinator Consulted ______

C. Remarks (attach additional pages as needed):

[Signature]  ______
signature  date
[Title]  office

XII. Chief - Division of Federal Aid:

A. Concurrence ______  Nonconcurrence ______

[Signature]  ______
signature  [Date]
Appendix 3

April 22, 2019

Mr. Dwight D. Hensley
Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency
Engineering Division, Ellington Agricultural Center
P.O. Box 40747
Nashville, TN 37204

RE: USF&WS / U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Hunter Education Facility, Buffalo Ridge Refuge
WMA, Humphreys County, TN

Dear Mr. Hensley:

In response to your request, we have reviewed the revised archaeological report of investigations and accompanying documentation submitted by you regarding the above-referenced undertaking. Our review of and comment on your proposed undertaking are among the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. This Act requires federal agencies or applicants for federal assistance to consult with the appropriate State Historic Preservation Office before they carry out their proposed undertakings. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation has codified procedures for carrying out Section 106 review in 36 CFR 800 (Federal Register, December 12, 2000, 77696-77739).

Considering the information provided, we find that no archaeological resources eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places will be affected by this undertaking. If project plans are changed or archaeological remains are discovered during project construction, please contact this office to determine what further action, if any, will be necessary to comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Complete and/or updated Tennessee Site Records should be submitted to the Tennessee Division of Archaeology for all sites recorded and/or revisited during the current investigation. Questions or comments may be directed to Jennifer Barnett (615) 687-4780.

Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr.
Executive Director and
State Historic Preservation Officer

EPM/jmb

Received

APR 29 2019

TN Wildlife Resources
Engineering Division
Appendix 4

NEPA COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

State: TENNESSEE  Federal Financial Assistance Grant/Agreement/Amendment Number: _______

TWRA Project Number: ____________

Project Name: ________ Buffalo Ridge Land Disposal Project

This proposal (check (✓) one) □ is: ✗ is not completely covered by categorical exclusion # ___ in 516 DM 2, Appendix 1.

(Review proposed activities. An appropriate categorical exclusion must be identified before completing the remainder of the Checklist. If a categorical exclusion cannot be identified, or the proposal cannot meet the qualifying criteria in the categorical exclusion, or an extraordinary circumstance applies (see below), an EA must be prepared.)

Extraordinary Circumstances:
Will This Proposal (check (✓) yes or no for each item below):

Yes  No

1. Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety.

2. Have significant adverse effects on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (Executive Order 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas under Federal ownership or jurisdiction.

3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].

4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.

5. Have a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.

6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.

7. Have significant adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office, the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, or a consulting party under 36 CFR 800.

8. Have significant adverse effects on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

9. Have highly significant adverse effects on wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds (Executive Order 13186); and other ecologically significant or critical areas under Federal ownership or jurisdiction.

10. Have the possibility of violating a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

11. Have the possibility for a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

12. Have the possibility to significantly contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

(If any of the above extraordinary circumstances receive a 'Yes' check (✓), an EA must be prepared.)

Yes  ◤ No  This grant/project includes additional information supporting the Checklist.

Concurrences/Approvals:
Project Leader:  Tim White  Date: May 21, 2020

State Authority Concurrence:  Tim White  Date: May 21, 2020
(with financial assistance signature authority, if applicable)

Within the spirit and intent of the Council of Environmental Quality's regulations for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other statutes, orders, and policies that protect fish and wildlife resources, I have established the
following administrative record and have determined that the grant/agreement/amendment:

☐ is a categorical exclusion as provided by 516 DM 6, Appendix 1 and/or 516 DM 2, Appendix 1. No further NEPA documentation will therefore be made.

☐ is not completely covered by the categorical exclusion as provided by 516 DM 6, Appendix 1 and/or 516 DM 2, Appendix 1. An EA must be prepared.

Service signature approval:

RO or WO Environmental Coordinator: ________________________________  Date: ________________________
Staff Specialist, Division of Federal Assistance: __________________________ Date:_________________________
(or authorized Service representative with financial assistance signature authority)

FWS Categorical Exclusions in 516 DM 2 Appendix 1

A.(1) Changes or amendments to an approved action when such changes have no or minor potential environmental impact.

A.(2) Personnel training, environmental interpretation, public safety efforts, and other educational activities, which do not involve new construction or major additions to existing facilities.

A.(3) The issuance and modification of procedures, including manuals, orders, guidelines and field instructions, when the impacts are limited to administrative effects.

A.(4) The acquisition of real property obtained either through discretionary acts or when acquired by law, whether by way of condemnation, donation, escheat, right-of-entry, escrow, exchange, lapses, purchase, or transfer and that will be under the jurisdiction or control of the United States. Such acquisition of real property shall be in accordance with 602 DM 2 and the Service's procedures, when the acquisition is from a willing seller, continuance of or minor modification to the existing land use is planned, and the acquisition planning process has been performed in coordination with the affected public.

B.(1) Research, inventory, and information collection activities directly related to the conservation of fish and wildlife resources which involve negligible animal mortality or habitat destruction, no introduction of contaminants, or no introduction of organisms not indigenous to the affected ecosystem.

B.(2) The operation, maintenance, and management of existing facilities and routine recurring management activities and improvements, including renovations and replacements which result in no or only minor changes in the use, and have no or negligible environmental effects on-site or in the vicinity of the site.

B.(3) The construction of new, or the addition of, small structures or improvements, including structures and improvements for the restoration of wetland, riparian, instream, or native habitats, which result in no or only minor changes in the use of the affected local area. The following are examples of activities that may be included: i. The installation of fences. ii. The construction of small water control structures. iii. The planting of seeds or seedlings and other minor revegetation actions. iv. The construction of small berms or dikes. v. The development of limited access for routine maintenance and management purposes.

B.(4) The use of prescribed burning for habitat improvement purposes, when conducted in accordance with local and State ordinances and laws.

B.(5) Fire management activities, including prevention and restoration measures, when conducted in accordance with departmental and Service procedures.

B.(6) The reintroduction or supplementation (e.g., stocking) of native, formerly native, or established species into suitable habitat within their historic or established range, where no or negligible environmental disturbances are anticipated.

B.(7) Minor changes in the amounts or types of public use on Service or State-managed lands, in accordance with existing regulations, management plans, and procedures.
B.(8) Consultation and technical assistance activities directly related to the conservation of fish and wildlife resources.

B.(9) Minor changes in existing master plans, comprehensive conservation plans, or operations, when no or minor effects are anticipated. Examples could include minor changes in the type and location of compatible public use activities and land management practices.

B.(10) The issuance of new or revised site, unit, or activity-specific management plans for public use, land use, or other management activities when only minor changes are planned. Examples could include an amended public use plan or fire management plan.

B.(11) Natural resource damage assessment restoration plans, prepared under sections 107, 111, and 122(j) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA); section 311 (f)(4) of the Clean Water Act; and the Oil Pollution Act; when only minor or negligible change in the use of the affected areas is planned.

E.(1) State, local, or private financial assistance (grants and/or cooperative agreements), including State planning grants and private land restorations, where the environmental effects are minor or negligible.