

Decision Memo

Accessible Hunting Blind

**USDA Forest Service
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
Will County, IL
Section 10 T33N, R9E**

Background

The Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie is comprised of 18, 225 acres of federal land managed by the USDA Forest Service. There are 7, 200 acres of land open to the public, 2,890 acres on the west sides and 4, 350 acres on the east side. These open areas are presently utilized by hunters during Illinois deer and turkey hunting seasons.

Currently there are three accessible hunting blinds located at Midewin; two of which are located on the east side and one on the west side of state highway 53. The shortest distance to any of these blinds is ½ mile from the nearest parking lot. Midewin has 128 designated hunting posts at specific locations on the west side, providing access to 65 hunters per day based on alternate even/odd days. The east side allows for 76 recommended hunters per day divided between seven zones.

For the past several hunting seasons Midewin has received requests for an accessible hunting blind providing easy access to people with disabilities. Presently, the distance from the nearest parking lot to the accessible hunting blinds does not allow someone with limited mobility to enjoy the extent of Midewin's hunting experience, if at all.

Decision

I have decided to authorize the construction of an accessible hunting blind for hunters with disabilities. The hunting blind will be constructed approximately 600 feet from Parking Lot #1 on River Road. Construction of the blind will include improving approximately 450 feet of the existing two-track road and constructing approximately 100 feet of new trail. The entire trail should not extend over a maximum of 4 feet in width. The new trail will include a 8- to 12-foot bridge extending over a low area seasonally containing water. The actual blind will be 8' x 6' in dimension, with a construction area of approximately 12' x 12'.

The proposed action falls under Category 1, in Section 31.2 of the Forest Service Handbook 1909.15-Environmental Policy and Procedures Handbook. Based on past experience, the effects of implementing this action will be of limited context and intensity and will result in little or no environmental effects to either the physical or biological components of the environment. The action does not involve any extraordinary circumstances. Following a review by the interdisciplinary team, it was determined that construction of this blind at the specified location would not disturb any threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant or animal species, archeological sites or alter any hydrological processes. Therefore, this action will not have any likely

significant impacts and can be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement

Public Involvement

A proposal was listed in the Schedule of Proposed Actions from January 1, 2008 to April 1, 2008. The proposal was provided to the hunters and other interested persons for comment in a scoping letter on June 26, 2008. No comments were received during this period.

Findings Required by Other Laws

This decision is consistent with the following applicable laws and regulations:

Prairie Plan Consistency (National Forest Management Act) - This Act requires the development of long-range land and resource management plans (Forest and Prairie Plans). The Midewin Prairie Plan was approved in February 2002, as required by this Act. The Plan provides guidance for all natural resource management activities on Midewin. The Act requires all projects and activities to be consistent with the Prairie Plan. The Prairie Plan has been reviewed in consideration of this project. This decision is responsive to guiding direction contained in the Plan. This decision is consistent with the standards and guidelines contained in the Prairie Plan.

Disabilities Discrimination Act of 2005: This Act is an extension of the Disabilities Discrimination Act of 1995, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against people in respect to their disabilities. The Act of 2005 includes public transportation and public entities to promote equality for disabled persons.

Implementation Date

This project can be implemented immediately.

Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is not subject to administrative appeal pursuant 36 CFR 215 § 215.6.

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision or the Forest Service appeal process, contact Maya Solomon, NEPA Specialist, via e-mail at *mayasolomon@fs.fed.us*, by telephone at (815) 423-6370, or in person at 30239 South State Route 53, Wilmington, IL 60481.

/s/ William Glass, for
Logan Lee,
Prairie Supervisor

September 9, 2008
Date

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