

**DRAFT**

***Wildlife Management Plan  
and Environmental Assessment  
for  
Harvestable Species***

# **Summary of Alternatives**

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore  
Bayfield, Wisconsin  
November 2006

## ACTIONS COMMON TO ALL ALTERNATIVES

- The NPS will meet with the Wisconsin DNR and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission and other tribal representatives on an annual and as-needed basis to discuss current research, issues, and upcoming seasons.
- Target harvest levels will be determined considering both general public and treaty-related harvests. Allocation of harvest will be made in consultation with the DNR and GLIFWC and other tribal representatives consistent with federal court decisions, other legal authorities and NPS stewardship goals.
- To fully implement any of the action alternatives, the NPS would work with the State of Wisconsin, utilizing the state's regulatory process, to modify current state regulations for Deer Management Unit 79.
- Where appropriate, current state hunting and trapping regulations would be adopted by the NPS, in accordance with existing regulations.
- Small game and waterfowl populations within the park would be managed as part of the larger state management unit and applicable state regulations that are not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the NPS.
- Restrictions to protect resources and visitors are consistent for all alternatives and include:
  - No hunting during peak visitor season (Memorial Day through Labor Day)
  - No hunting or trapping on Gull or Eagle Islands (colonial birds)
  - Restrictions outlined in the Superintendent's Compendium and formal agreements between the NPS and Tribes.
- Should control of any wildlife populations be needed beyond that which can be accomplished with general public or treaty-related harvests, the NPS may employ more aggressive management actions such as direct reduction (by NPS or under contract).
- If a specific management control effort were conducted in the winter or spring, rather than the fall, it would not be done within a 1/2 mile radius of historically active (in the past 5 years) eagle nests as long as eagles remain on the list of federally threatened and endangered species or within a 1 mile radius of historic nesting locations for piping plover.

***Alternative A***- No Action (continuation of current management)

**Deer**

- October muzzleloader hunt on Basswood, Oak, Sand and York Islands; park-specific permit required; use of standard hunting tag(s) for harvested deer
- Under current WI regulations, October muzzleloader hunt could be expanded to all islands within DMU 79
- Mainland unit is included within DMU 3
- Long Island is included within DMU 7
- If hunting is not adequate to meet management goals, options to increase harvest are limited to the use of DNR issued nuisance permits. Current regulations do not allow the park to expand hunting opportunities beyond the muzzleloader hunt.

**Bear**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations have been adopted by the park
- Park is included within management zone A1

**Furbearers**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations have been adopted by the park
- Park is included within a larger management unit

**Small Game**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations have been adopted by the park
- Park is included within a larger management unit

**Waterfowl**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations have been adopted by the park
- Park is included within a larger management unit

## ***Alternative B*** – No Special Seasons or Park-specific Regulations

### **General**

- To implement this alternative, the NPS would work with the state, utilizing the state's regulatory process, to modify current regulations specific to DMU 79. The State of Wisconsin's special regulation authorizing the muzzleloader hunt would be eliminated and hunting that is consistent with current statewide regulations for deer reinstated.
- The NPS would also work with the tribes through on-going agreements and Memoranda of Understanding to achieve goals outlined in this alternative.

### **Deer**

- On an annual basis, the Wisconsin DNR would develop specific goals and quotas for state-regulated hunters in DMU 79 (not done now), and establish hunting seasons, weapon types, etc. Similar to how the mainland unit is managed as part of DMU 3, the state would manage DMU 79. The NPS would adopt state regulations that are not in conflict with federal regulations.
- The mainland unit would continue to be managed as part of DMU 3.
- Long Island would continue to be managed as part of DMU 7.
- If hunting is not adequate to meet management goals, options to increase harvest would be limited to the use of DNR issued nuisance permits. However, under this regulatory framework, nuisance permits would be much more difficult to obtain than under Alternative A.

### **Bear**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the park.
- Park would continue to be included within a larger management unit (Zone A1).

### **Furbearers**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the park.
- Park would continue to be included within a larger management unit.

### **Small Game and Waterfowl**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the park.
- Park would continue to be included within a larger management unit.

## ***Alternative C*** – Manage for Historic Ecological Habitat Conditions and Diverse Hunting Experiences

### **General**

- To implement this alternative, the NPS would work with the state, utilizing the state's regulatory process, to modify current regulations specific to DMU 79. Special regulations would be needed to expand the deer hunting season, allow a wider range of weapon types, and develop DMU 79-specific tags and permits.
- The NPS would also work with the tribes through on-going agreements and Memoranda of Understanding to achieve goals outlined in this alternative.

### **Deer**

- DMU 79 would be divided into two zones with different management goals:
  - Zone 1 (8 islands (29% of park's land acreage); islands that historically had few to no deer – Devils, Eagle, Gull, North Twin, Outer, Raspberry, Sand, York) Overall goal is to protect rare vegetation and native biological communities. Because the vegetation on these islands is exceptionally sensitive to deer browse, very few deer could cause long-term impacts. Therefore, the goal on these islands is to keep deer numbers as low as possible (e.g., few to no deer). NOTE: Currently (2006), the only islands where this goal is not being achieved are Sand and York (8% of park's land acreage). Gull and Eagle Islands are closed to hunting to protect colonial birds; Gull is three acres in size and does not provide good deer habitat.
  - Zone 2 (12 islands; historically had low to high deer populations – Basswood, Bear, Cat, Hermit, Ironwood, Manitou, Michigan, Oak, Otter, Rocky, South Twin, Stockton). Overall goal is to protect native biological communities; keep deer populations at or below estimated historic levels (approx. 10/mi<sup>2</sup>) (Dahlberg and Guettinger 1956).
- All of DMU 79 (all islands, except Long) would be open to hunting and there would be an increase in hunting opportunities (e.g., extended seasons, weapon types, etc.)
- Working with the state DNR, DMU 79-specific tags and permits would be developed to provide greater incentives for increased harvest and enable wildlife managers to obtain harvest data in a timely manner. These tags would not count against a hunter's standard deer hunting tag.
- Long Island would continue to be managed as part of DMU 7.
- The mainland unit would continue to be managed as part of DMU 3.
- A special muzzleloader hunt during October on Basswood and Oak Islands would continue
- Hunting is the preferred option to managing deer numbers within the park. However, if hunting is not adequate to meet management goals, management control (e.g., liberal seasons, nuisance permits, agency or contracted herd reduction, etc.) would be used to prevent long-term impacts to other important natural resources. Although management control may be needed within Zone 1, the likelihood of needing management control on islands within Zone 2 is very low.

**Bear**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the NPS.
- Park would continue to be part of a larger management unit (A1).
- Park-specific permit would be developed for DMU 79 - to enable wildlife managers to obtain harvest data in a timely manner.

**Furbearers**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the park.
- Park would continue to be part of a larger management unit.
- Park-specific permit would be developed for DMU 79 - to enable wildlife managers to obtain harvest data in a timely manner.

**Small Game and Waterfowl**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the park.
- Park would continue to be included within a larger management unit.

## ***Alternative D*** – Manage for Historic Ecological Habitat Conditions and Primitive Hunting Experiences (Preferred Alternative)

### **General**

- To implement this alternative, the NPS would work with the state, utilizing the state's regulatory process, to modify current regulations specific to DMU 79. Special regulations would be needed to expand the deer hunting season, specify primitive weapons for deer, bear and hunted furbearers, and develop DMU 79-specific tags and permits.
- The NPS would also work with the tribes through on-going agreements and Memoranda of Understanding to achieve goals outlined in this alternative.

### **Deer**

- Only primitive weapons (e.g., muzzleloader, bow, etc.) would be used for hunting
- As in Alternative C, DMU 79 would be divided into two zones with different management goals:
  - Zone 1 (8 islands (29% of park's land acreage); islands that historically had few to no deer – Devils, Eagle, Gull, North Twin, Outer, Raspberry, Sand, York) Overall goal is to protect rare vegetation and native biological communities. Because the vegetation on these islands is exceptionally sensitive to deer browse, very few deer could cause long-term impacts. Therefore, the goal on these islands is to keep deer numbers as low as possible (e.g., few to no deer).
  - Zone 2 (12 islands; historically had low to high deer populations – Basswood, Bear, Cat, Hermit, Ironwood, Manitou, Michigan, Oak, Otter, Rocky, South Twin, Stockton). Overall goal is to protect native biological communities; keep deer populations at or below estimated historic levels (approx. 10/mi<sup>2</sup>)(Dahlberg and Guettinger 1956).
- All of DMU 79 would be open to hunting and there would be increased hunting opportunities (e.g., extended seasons, etc.).
- Working with the state DNR, DMU 79-specific tags and permits would be developed to provide greater incentives for increased harvest and enable wildlife managers to obtain harvest data in a timely manner.
- Zone 2 would have a special muzzleloader hunt during October.
- Long Island would continue to be managed as part of DMU 7.
- The mainland unit would continue to be managed as part of DMU 3.
- The use of hunting is the preferred option to managing deer numbers within the park. However, if hunting is not adequate to meet management goals, management control (e.g., liberal seasons, nuisance permits, agency or contracted herd reduction, etc.) would be used to prevent long-term impacts to other important natural resources. Although management control may be needed in within Zone 1, the likelihood of needing management control on islands within Zone 2 is very low.

**Bear**

- Only primitive weapons (e.g., muzzleloader, bow, etc.) would be used for hunting.
- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the NPS.
- Park would continue to be part of a larger management unit (A1).
- Park-specific permit would be developed for DMU 79 - to enable wildlife managers to obtain harvest data in a timely manner.

**Furbearers**

- Use of primitive weapons only if animals were hunted rather than trapped.
- State regulations (hunting and trapping) that are not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the NPS.
- Park would continue to be part of a larger management unit.
- NPS permit would be developed for DMU 79 - to enable wildlife managers to obtain harvest data in a timely manner.

**Small Game and Waterfowl**

- State regulations not in conflict with federal regulations would be adopted by the park.
- Park would continue to be included within a larger management unit.