

Facility: Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge
Title: Fire Management Plan Environmental Assessment

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

For the reasons briefly presented below and based on an evaluation of the information contained in the supporting references enumerated below, I have determined that the implementation of the management ignited prescribed fire and wildland fire suppression program as described in Alternative A in the Environmental Assessment of the Fire Management Plan for Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge, is not a major Federal action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. An Environmental Impact Statement will, accordingly, not be prepared.

Reasons:

- 1 Protection of life and property through wildfire suppression is critical and is the main focus of this fire management plan.
- 2 Reduction of fuels through prescribed burning will greatly reduce the number or severity of wildland fires thereby reducing the risk to life and property.
- 3 Maintenance of grasslands and other early successional habitats through prescribed fire will greatly benefit several Service trust species that are declining region wide.

Mitigating Measures:

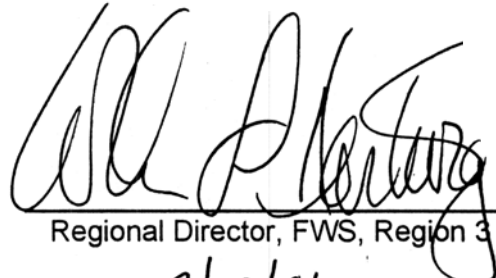
- 1 In order to avoid impacts to the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), a Federally endangered species, no prescribed burning will be conducted between the dates of April 15 and September 15.
- ~~2~~ In order to minimize impacts to the *M. sodalis*, all wildland fires occurring between April 15 and September 15 will be suppressed in a manner that minimizes the size of the wildland fire while recognizing the unique safety hazards associated with suppression in an area containing unexploded ordnance and other contaminants.
- 3 Unexploded ordnance hazard zones will be established by the refuge manager, wildland fire incident commander or prescribed fire burn boss for all fires occurring on the refuge. These zones will be based on the potential fragmentation range of ordnance as advised by the U.S. Army. All access within this zone is prohibited except by authorization of the refuge manager, wildland fire incident commander or prescribed fire burn boss.
- 4 A review of this plan will be conducted annually to determine if burning within areas of the refuge that contain contaminants including depleted uranium, resulting from past Army

use, pose a risk to the public, fire management personnel, or the environment. No prescribed fires are planned to occur in areas containing depleted uranium during the current fire management year (2001).

5. No impacts to cultural resources are anticipated by this action.

Supporting References:

1. Environmental Assessment Checklist
2. Environmental Assessment
3. Section 7 Consultation
4. Fire Management Plan



Regional Director, FWS, Region 3
Date: 3/02/01

Distribution:
Wash., DC (OEC)
State Clearinghouse