

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Upper Mississippi River National
Wildlife & Fish Refuge
Headquarters
51 East Fourth Street, Room 101
Winona, MN 55987 (507/452 4232)

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/UpperMississippiRiver>
Email: UpperMississippiRiver@fws.gov
507/452 4232

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD
<http://www.fws.gov/>

People with hearing impairments may
contact the refuge through the Federal
Relay Number at 1 800/877 8339.



Upper Mississippi River

*National Wildlife
& Fish Refuge*

Public Use Regulations



Winona District (Pools 4-6)
51 East Fourth Street, Room 203
Winona, MN 55987 (507/454 7351)

La Crosse District (Pools 7-8)
555 Lester Avenue
Onalaska, WI 54650 (608/783 8405)

McGregor District (Pools 9-11)
P.O. Box 460
McGregor, IA 52157 (563/873 3423)

Savanna District (Pools 12-14)
7071 Riverview Road
Thomson, IL 61285 (815/273 2732)

Public Use Regulations

Welcome to the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. Established in 1924, the 240,000-acre refuge provides for the needs of fish, wildlife, and millions of annual visitors. To conserve this special place, and safeguard the experience for all, we ask you to observe these regulations.

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|----------------------------|---|--|--|
| <i>Alcohol</i> | Persons under 21 may not possess or use alcohol in accordance with state laws. Entering or remaining on the refuge when under the influence of alcohol, to a degree that may endanger oneself or other persons or property or unreasonably annoy persons in the vicinity, is prohibited. Providing alcohol to minors is prohibited. Use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited. | <i>Dogs and other domestic animals</i> | No dogs are allowed to disturb or endanger wildlife or people while on the refuge. All dogs while on the refuge must be under the control of their owners/handlers at all times or on a leash. No dogs are allowed to roam. All dogs must be on a leash when on hiking trails, or other areas so posted. Working a dog in refuge waters by tossing a retrieval dummy or other object for out-and-back exercise is allowed. Owners/handlers of dogs are also responsible for disposal of dog droppings on refuge public use concentration areas such as trails, sandbars, and boat landings. Field trials or commercial/professional dog training activities and other unconfined domestic animals are prohibited on the refuge. Horses and all other domestic animals are prohibited unless confined in a vehicle, boat, trailer, kennel or other container. |
| <i>Artifacts</i> | Searching for or removing objects of antiquity, such as arrowheads, is prohibited. | <i>Firearms</i> | Carrying, possessing, or discharging firearms (including dog training pistols and dummy launchers), air guns, or any other weapons on the refuge is prohibited, except by licensed hunters or trappers engaged in authorized activities during established seasons, in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations. Target practice is prohibited. |
| <i>Boat Mooring</i> | Boats may not be moored, beached, or stored on the refuge without being used at least once every 24 hours. Mooring within 200 feet of refuge boat landings is prohibited. Boats moored in violation may be impounded at the owner's expense. | <i>Fireworks</i> | Possession or use of fireworks or explosives is not allowed on the refuge. |
| <i>Collecting</i> | Collecting for sale or barter is prohibited. Collecting edible fruits, nuts, mushrooms, or other plant parts for personal use is allowed with a limit of 2 gallons per person, per day. Wild rice harvest is prohibited. Cutting or removing plants or their parts for ornamental use is prohibited unless specifically authorized by permit. Collecting of plant and animal specimens, natural objects, rocks, stones or minerals is also prohibited. Shed deer antlers may be collected for personal use. | <i>Fishing</i> | Fishing is allowed in accordance with state and federal regulations. Ice fishing shelters may be placed and used in accordance with state regulations. |
| <i>Disturbing Behavior</i> | Unreasonably disturbing other visitors by the inconsiderate operation or use of any audio devices, power equipment, or lighting devices, or interfering with, | <i>Geocaching</i> | Geocaching is not allowed on the refuge. |
| | | <i>Glass Containers</i> | The use or possession of glass food and beverage containers on lands within the refuge is prohibited (vehicles and watercraft are exempt). |

Group Events

A refuge permit is required to hold public meetings, assemblies, demonstrations, parties, organized group events, and other public gatherings.

Hunting

Portions of the refuge are open to hunting and trapping in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations with the most restrictive regulation applying on the refuge. Hunting is prohibited from March 16 through August 31, except spring wild turkey seasons, and, squirrel hunting on the Illinois portion of the refuge. See Hunting brochure.

Private Structures

The construction or storage of private structures is not allowed on the refuge without a special use permit. See Hunting brochure for regulations on temporary hunting blinds.

Vegetation

Cutting, removing, or damaging any tree or other vegetation is prohibited without a permit. Nails, screws, or other hardware may not be attached to trees. Cutting willow, up to a diameter of 2 inches, for trap stakes, commercial fishing gear, and hunting blinds on the refuge is allowed. Dead wood on the ground may be cut and used for campfires on the refuge.

Vehicles

All vehicle use on or across refuge lands is prohibited, except on designated routes of travel, or on the ice over navigable waters accessed from boat landings. Parking beyond vehicle control barriers, or on grass or other vegetation is prohibited. Vehicles are not allowed to obstruct or impede any road, trail, fire lane, boat ramp, access gate, or other facility. Parking in a manner to create a safety hazard, or endanger any person, property, or environmental feature is prohibited. Any vehicles left parked in violation may be impounded at the owner's expense.

Camping

Camping Regulations

Camping is defined as erecting a tent or shelter of natural or synthetic material, preparing a sleeping bag or other bedding material for use, parking of a motor vehicle or mooring or anchoring of a vessel, for the apparent purpose of overnight occupancy, or, occupying or leaving personal property, including boats or other craft, at a site anytime between the hours of 11 p.m. and 3 a.m.

Camping on land or on boats at any one site on the refuge for a period longer than 14 days during any 30-consecutive-day period is prohibited.

After 14 days, you must move all persons, property, equipment, and boats to a new site located at least 0.5 mile away from the previous site. Campsites must be occupied daily.

Leaving tents, camping equipment, or other property unattended at any site for over 24 hours is prohibited.

Any property left unattended in violation may be impounded at the owner's expense. If tables, fireplaces, or other facilities are erected, they must be removed before departure.

Camping within 200 feet of refuge boat landings, access areas, parking lots, structures, roads, trails, or other facilities is prohibited.

During waterfowl hunting seasons, camping is prohibited within areas posted Area Closed or No Hunting Zone, or on any sites not clearly visible from the main commercial navigation channel.

Campfires

Fires are allowed only in conjunction with camping, day use activities, or on the ice while ice fishing using only dead wood on the ground, or materials brought onto the refuge such as charcoal or firewood. (*See Firewood Section*) Any unused firewood brought onto the refuge must be removed upon departure due to threat of invasive insects. Building, attending, maintaining, or using any fire without sufficient clearance from flammable materials adequate to prevent its escape is not allowed. Building fires at any developed facility is prohibited. Developed facilities include, but are not limited to, structures, boat landings, access areas, parking lots, roads and trails. Burying live fires or hot coals is prohibited. Burning or attempting to burn any nonflammable materials or any materials that may produce toxic fumes or leave hazardous wastes is not allowed. These include, but are not limited to, metal cans, plastic containers, glass, fiberglass, treated wood products, wood containing nails or staples, wire, floatation materials, and other refuse.

Firewood

Firewood pests such as emerald ash borer pose a threat to the river's forests! In cooperation with other agencies, firewood originating more than 50 miles from the refuge is not allowed unless certified as pest-free when purchased.

Sanitation

All refuge lands must be kept clean during the period of use or occupancy. All refuse, trash, and litter must be contained in bags or other suitable containers, and not left scattered on the ground or in the water at any time. Human solid waste and associated material must either be removed and properly disposed of off-refuge, or, be buried on site to a depth of 6-8 inches and at least 50 feet from water's edge. The burying or burning of all other refuse, trash, or litter is prohibited. All personal property, refuse, trash, and litter must be removed immediately upon vacating a site.

Electric Motor Areas

Slow, No-Wake Areas

Slow, No- Wake Zones

Special Designation Areas

These areas are closed year-round to all motorized vehicles and watercraft except watercraft powered by electric motors or non-motorized means. The possession of other watercraft motors is not prohibited, only their use. For example, anglers could switch from using an outboard motor to an electric trolling motor when entering these areas. These areas are: Island 42-Pool 5, Snyder Lake-Pool 5A, Mertes Slough-Pool 6, Browns Marsh-Pool 7, and Hoosier Lake-Pool 10.

From March 16 through October 31 in these areas, watercraft must travel at slow, no-wake speed. No airboats or hovercraft are allowed during same time period. Respective state definitions for what constitutes "slow, no-wake" speed or operation apply. These areas are: Nelson-Trevino-Pool 4 (effective March 16, 2009), Denzers Slough-Pool 5A, Black River Bottoms-Pool 7, Blue/Target Lake-Pool 8, Root River-Pool 8, Reno Bottoms-Pool 9, Nine Mile Island-Pool 12, and Princeton-Pool 14.

Watercraft are required to travel at slow, no-wake speed at all times. Respective state definitions for what constitutes "slow, no-wake" speed or operation apply.

Special Regulation Areas

Areas throughout the refuge are designated as closed or restricted use areas, usually autumn to spring, to protect migrating waterfowl or for public safety. These areas are marked with orange-topped “special regulation” signs and list the restrictions and effective dates or seasons. Please read and adhere to the regulations identified by these signs.

This is a listing of the most commonly referenced regulations. Additional regulations are published in the Code of Federal Regulations Title 50, Subchapter C, The National Wildlife Refuge System, and available at refuge offices or the refuge website.



Leave No Trace

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Refuge Signs - Know their Meaning!

Boundary Signs

These signs mark the refuge boundary or let you know you are in the refuge.



Electric Motor Areas

These signs identify an area which is closed year-round to all motorized vehicles and watercraft except watercraft powered by electric motors or non-motorized means are allowed. The possession of other watercraft motors is not prohibited, only their use. For example, anglers could switch to an electric trolling motor when entering these areas.



Slow, No-Wake Areas

In areas marked by these signs, watercraft must travel at slow, no-wake speed and no airboats or hovercraft are allowed from March 16 through October 31. Respective state definitions for what constitutes “slow, no-wake” speed or operation apply.

Special Regulation

Special regulation signs designate various area restrictions during hunting seasons. See the refuge hunting brochure for complete descriptions of special regulation areas.

