

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



News Release

Midwest Region

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Amended Hunting Regulations Take Effect on Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today published a final rule in the *Federal Register* to amend the hunting regulations for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

The new regulations are effective immediately, although the provisions will not have an actual effect on hunting until the start of the 2009-10 seasons on the 240,000-acre, 261-mile-long refuge. Most of the changes stem from the Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan approved in 2006.

Acting Refuge Manager Rick Frietsche said the biggest change in the new rules is a modification of the Waterfowl Hunting Closed Areas in Pool 4 of the Refuge near Wabasha, Minn. and Nelson and Alma, Wisc. The Nelson-Trevino closed area has been eliminated, a new Big Lake closed area established, and modifications made to the existing Peterson Lake closed area.

Frietsche said the acres closed to some form of hunting in Pool 4 will go from the current 6,884 acres to 3,500 acres. The 3,773-acre Nelson-Trevino closed area will be open to hunting during the waterfowl season for the first time since 1958.

However, the means of access for hunting in Nelson-Trevino will change as it was designated a Slow, No Wake Area in rulemaking last year and the boating restrictions took effect March 16.

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In Slow, No Wake Areas, watercraft with motors are allowed but they must travel at slow, no wake speed from March 16 through October 31 each year. During the same time period, operation of airboats and hovercraft is prohibited.

Frietsche said other changes include the establishment of a 24-acre No Hunting Zone on Fountain City Bay in Pool 5A next to Merrick State Park in Wisconsin and the establishment of a 75-acre No Hunting or Trapping Zone on the so-called Mathy Tract on Brice Prairie near Pool 7.

Finally, the Refuge has changed its waterfowl retrieval regulation. Under the new rule, hunters must immediately make a reasonable effort to retrieve downed waterfowl unless the bird lies in plain sight, is clearly dead, and there is no risk of loss due to wind or current.

Frietsche said this change adds a time element to existing state retrieval regulations and is designed to reduce the loss of downed birds and to discourage hunters from shooting at birds that are beyond effective shotgun range.

The entire rule, along with fact sheets and links to maps and the CCP, is available at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/UpperMississippiRiver/>, click on Current Topics, or you may call (507) 452-4232 and request a copy.

The refuge CCP was approved in October, 2006 following four years of effort, including 46 public meetings or workshops attended by 4,500 persons. Previous rules in 2007 and 2008 implemented most of the hunting, fishing, and general recreation regulations outlined in the CCP.

In addition to being the most visited refuge in the country, the “Upper Miss” Refuge has the added complexity of a major navigation system, including 11 locks and dams, within its boundary. It is also a world-class fish and wildlife area which harbors 306 species of birds; 119 species of fish; more than 200 active bald eagle nests; thousands of heron and egret nests; spectacular concentrations of canvasback ducks, tundra swans, and white pelicans; and several threatened or endangered species.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [HTTP://www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).