

2025-2026 Blackwater NWR Deer Hunt Regulations

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge

Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is one of over 570 national wildlife refuges in the United States. The primary objective of a national wildlife refuge is to provide habitat for the conservation and protection of wildlife.

Your hunt permit authorizes you to take deer only. Coyotes may also be harvested incidentally during the refuge deer hunts. Taking and/or collecting any other wildlife or plants, including shed antlers, is a violation of refuge regulations. The regulations listed on this page supplement the general regulations which govern hunting on national wildlife refuges set forth in [Title 50: Part 32, Code of Federal Regulations](#). Hunting will be conducted in accordance with state regulations and will also be subject to the following additional conditions and requirements. Failure to abide by any Federal laws, State laws or the terms and conditions under which a hunt permit is issued may result in the revocation of the permit and hunting privileges.

Application Guidelines

- Beginning July 8, 2025, permits will be available for purchase online at www.recreation.gov or by phone at (877) 444-6777. Permits are required for all refuge hunts. Only one hunter per permit.
- Anyone who applies for a hunt permit in Areas U1 and Q2, which are designated for hunters with a permanent disability, are required to provide their Federal Interagency Access Pass number. Passes can be obtained at the refuge visitor center or online at <https://store.usgs.gov/access-pass>.
- Be sure to use your Maryland DNR identification number when applying for a refuge hunt permit. See image on the [recreation.gov website media gallery](#) if you have any questions.

Required Documents

Hunters are required to possess an electronic or printed copy of a valid Maryland hunting license and all corresponding State stamps (e.g. archery, muzzleloader, sika, etc.), an original valid government-issued photo identification (no copies or photos), and a valid hunting permit issued by recreation.gov, electronic or printed and signed, on their person at all times during refuge hunting and scouting days. Hunters hunting from a vehicle in designated areas must possess a Maryland DNR - issued Universal Disability Pass (formerly a "hunt from vehicle" permit).

Accessing the Refuge

- Commercial map applications are not to be relied upon as legal public land boundaries or evidence of open/closure to hunting. Hunters are responsible for following regulations, hunting in designated hunt areas, and being aware of closed areas according to the [Blackwater NWR Avenza Deer Hunt Map](#). The Avenza hunt map has been updated for 2025.
- Only participants who possess an authorized hunt permit will be allowed to enter hunt areas. No unpermitted assistants allowed.
- Hunters may access the refuge on hunt days up to 3 hours before legal sunrise and must exit the refuge within 3 hours after legal sunset (including parking lots).
- Vehicles may only be operated on designated roads and parking areas indicated on the refuge Deer Hunt Map. Vehicles may not exceed 15 MPH on any refuge road. Parking in front of gates or impeding traffic is prohibited; all wheels must be completely off the roadway.
- The use of ATVs, motorized off-road vehicles, and amphibious vehicles are prohibited on the refuge except at Hunt Areas U1 and Q2 which are designated for hunters with a permanent disability. See **Designated Disabled Hunt Areas – U1 and Q2** for regulations on ATV use in those units.
- Bicycles, including e-bikes, are authorized only on designated roads and trails to access hunting areas. See refuge Deer Hunting web page for [more information on e-bikes](#).
- During archery and open hunts, boats may only be launched from private land or the Route 335 soft launch to access areas B1, M1, R, S, T and X. Boat access is not allowed during limited hunts.
- Hunters are required to receive permission from the refuge manager or designee prior to entering a closed area to retrieve game or a non-hunt day.
- Hunters may only enter the area assigned to them during the limited hunts

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Scouting

Scouting will only be permitted from 7:00 am to sunset on August 31, September 4 & 28, October 12 & 23, November 9 & 30, December 4 & 11, 2025 and January 1, 4 & 11, 2026. Scouting is not permitted outside of these dates and times.

Designated Disabled Hunt Areas – U1 and Q2

- Hunters with a permanent disability must possess their Federal Interagency Access Pass on their person at all times during refuge hunting and scouting days in addition to all necessary documents listed under the **Required Documents** section.
- Persons who do not possess a hunt permit who are assisting a hunter with a permanent disability must sign the hunter's permit as the assistant, possess a valid government issued identification, and obey all refuge, State and Federal laws and regulations.
- Assistants may hunt if they possess a valid refuge hunt permit for that specific day (or group of days) for any hunt area. The assistant must possess all necessary documents listed under the **Required Documents** section to harvest deer.
- All refuge-provided hunt blinds are reserved for hunters with a permanent disability only; however, when a disabled hunter and their permit-holding assistant occupy the same blind, both may take game.
- All assistants must adhere to State blaze orange or daylight fluorescent pink requirements.
- ATVs are only permitted to be operated by Federal Interagency Access Passholders. When the passholder is unable to physically do so, the assistant may operate the ATV.
- ATVs must only be operated on established roads and/or field edges; amphibious vehicles or Argos are not permitted. ATVs may not be operated above 10 MPH on the refuge. A DOT approved helmet and eye protection must be always worn while riding an ATV.
- Parking an ATV on access roads, in front of gates, or impeding other ATVs or vehicles, is prohibited.
- If hunting from an ATV, hunters are required to also have the U (universal disability) designation on their Maryland State hunting license or a handicap placard and a Maryland Universal Disability Pass (formerly known as a "hunt from vehicle" permit).
- Shooting from, across or down any ATV access road is prohibited.

Area U1 Only

- Stands and blinds must be removed daily from U1.
- Hunters with a permanent disability who are permitted to hunt in U1 may have an assistant who must remain within 5 yards of permittee. Assistants are not required to maintain sight and normal voice contact while retrieving game.
- Vehicles may not be operated in U1 beyond the designated parking area.
- See the refuge Deer Hunting web page for a [map of Area U1](#).

Area Q2 Only

- Hunters are required to have the U (universal disability) designation on their MD State hunting license or a handicap placard and a MD Universal Disability Pass (formerly known as a "hunt from vehicle" permit), and a Federal Interagency Access Pass.
- At any given time, Area Q2 is limited to six (6) hunters with permanent disabilities.
- Hunters must hunt in assigned areas from either the designated blind or their vehicle. Stands and ground hunting are prohibited. Hunters may only shoot within the designated shooting lanes.
- A sign-in/sign-out board is installed past the entrance gate within Q2 and must be completed every time a hunter enters or exits the area. If a hunter leaves the blind, it cannot be reserved for later use.
- For more information, see the [Area Q2 map and instructions](#) on the refuge's Deer Hunting webpage.

Youth Hunt (Nov. 15 and 16)

Hunters 16 years of age or younger may participate in the youth hunt if the individual possesses a valid hunting license including all necessary State stamps or is exempt from Maryland hunting license requirements. Youth must be accompanied in the field by one non-hunting adult/guardian aged 21 or older. Only areas B1 and U are open for the youth hunt. Youth hunters and those accompanying them must wear blaze orange or daylight fluorescent pink in accordance with State law. Non-hunting adults must print and sign the permit of the youth

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they are accompanying unless they have been issued, and have on them digitally or physically, a refuge hunt permit .

Tree Stands, Blinds, and Trail Markers

- Only portable, temporary tree stands and blinds are permitted on the refuge. Screw-in steps, spikes, and other objects that may damage trees are prohibited.
- All stands and blinds must be removed at the end of the hunt day, including U1. **Stands and blinds may not be left overnight.** Stands or blinds left will be deemed abandoned property and confiscated.
- Constructing or hunting from a permanent tree stand or blind is prohibited.
- Paint or any other permanent marker to mark trails, including the use of tacks, is prohibited.
- Hunters must remove all marking devices, including flagging, by the last day of their hunt.

Weapons

The refuge follows all State regulations for archery equipment, muzzleloading firearms, and firearms with the following exceptions:

- The use of rimfire and centerfire rifles that fire bottleneck cartridges is prohibited. Only shotguns and rifles that fire straight-walled cartridges are permitted during Shotgun and Youth hunt days.
- All handguns including muzzleloading pistols are prohibited.
- Air guns and air bows are prohibited.
- Hunters may use a lesser weapon during refuge hunts.

Other Regulations

- **Please note that for the 2026- 2027 hunting season, use of approved lead-free ammunition will be required for hunting all species, including deer, as codified in [Title 50 Code of Federal Regulations 32.2.\(k\)](#).**
- A State sika stamp is required to hunt sika in Maryland.
- The distribution of or hunting over bait is prohibited.
- Driving deer is prohibited, except on designated days in January.
- Pruning or cutting trees, plants, or use of natural vegetation is prohibited.
- Boats, bicycles, or any other equipment or property may not be left on the refuge overnight. All property must be removed at the end of each hunting day.
- Leaving deer organs or carcasses within 50 feet of any trail, road, or refuge structure is prohibited.
- Camping and campfires are not permitted.
- Guiding, outfitting, or advertising for commercial purposes are prohibited.
- Use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.
- Trail cameras are prohibited on the refuge.
- Shooting or hunting within 150 yards of any occupied structure is prohibited.
- Shooting from, across, or down any designated refuge road is prohibited. An open gate designates a refuge road.
- Blaze orange or daylight fluorescent pink must be worn in accordance with State law. Archery hunters must wear blaze orange or daylight fluorescent pink on the youth hunt day of Nov. 15.
- Area U and B1 will be closed to archery during the youth hunt on November 15, 2025.
- No Sunday hunting on the refuge except the Nov. 16 youth hunt.

Tagging and Checking Regulations

- ALL deer killed must be checked in accordance with State regulations under the public land code for Blackwater NWR (**543**). Any deer taken on the Jan. 24, 2026 Open Shotgun date must be checked as a firearms harvest.
- Coyotes incidentally taken during deer hunts must be reported to refuge management.

Report illegal activity or related information to: USFWS Law Enforcement at 443-737-7678.

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Season	Date(s)
Archery	(No Sunday hunting) September 5 - October 15, 2025 October 27 - November 28, 2025 December 15 – December 19, 2025 January 5 - January 8, 2026 January 12 - January 23, 2026 NO archery Jan. 24 – Shotgun Day January 26 – January 31, 2026 <i>NOTE: Area U and B1 closed to archery hunting on Nov. 15</i>
Limited Muzzleloader	October 16, 2025 (B3 open)
Open Muzzleloader	October 17, 2025 (B3 open) October 18, 2025 October 24 & 25, 2025 (antlerless only) December 25 - 27, 2025 January 2 & 3, 2026
Limited Shotgun*	December 1, 2025
Open Shotgun*	December 5, 2025 (B3 open) December 6, 2025 December 12 & 13, 2025 January 9, 2026 (B3 open) (deer drives allowed) January 10, 2026 (deer drives allowed) January 24, 2026 (deer drives allowed)
Primitive	February 2-4, 2026 Note: same hunt areas as Archery; Areas B3 and D3 closed
Youth	November 15 & 16, 2025 The only Sunday hunt on the refuge.
Scout Dates	August 31, 2025 September 4 & 28, 2025 October 12 & 23, 2025 November 9 & 30, 2025 December 4 & 11, 2025 January 1, 4 & 11, 2026
Bag Limits	State bag limits apply. For white-tailed, the bonus stamp and antler restrictions apply. An annual Sika Deer Stamp is required to hunt sika deer during any of the deer hunting seasons.
	*Rifles that fire straight-walled cartridges only are allowed during shotgun hunts.

BLACKWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

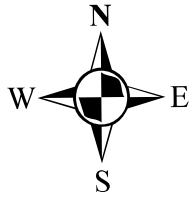
Deer Hunt Units

2025 - 2026 Season

-  Shotgun, Muzzleloader
Limited Dates: Oct 16-17, Dec 5, Jan 9
-  Shotgun, Muzzleloader
-  Archery, Shotgun, Muzzleloader
-  Archery, Shotgun, Muzzleloader, Youth
-  Closed to All Access
-  Harriet Tubman National Park (HTNP) - Closed to Access
-  Private Inholdings
-  Hunt Parking
-  Boat Launch
Hand Launch Only
-  Major Roads
-  Refuge Roads
-  Closed to Vehicles

Area	Acres	Archery	Shotgun	Muzzleloader	Youth
A	798	X	X	X	
B1	369	X	X	X	X
B2	82	X	X	X	
B3	318		⊗	⊗	
D1	71	X	X	X	
D2	294	X	X	X	
D3	196		X	X	
D4	180	X	X	X	
E	1854	X	X	X	
M1	1055	X	X	X	
M2	1912	X	X	X	
N	697	X	X	X	
Q1	664	X	X	X	
Q2*	137	X*	X*	X*	
R	1152	X	X	X	
S	1490	X	X	X	
T	1273	X	X	X	
U	1926	X	X	X	X
U1*	203	X*	X*	X*	
W	726	X	X	X	
X	1439	X	X	X	

*Q2 & U1 Certified Disabled Only ⊗ B3 Limited Hunt Area



0 0.5 1 2
Miles

NOTE:
USFWS Properties along the Nanticoke River are closed to public deer hunting.

Public Land Code (543)

