

# Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

Welcome to Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). The refuge is located in northeastern North Carolina, and stretches through Hyde, Tyrrell, and Washington Counties. Today Pocosin Lakes NWR encompasses 110,106 acres which are used to provide habitat for migratory waterfowl, other migratory birds, and threatened and endangered species; to protect and enhance the pocosin habitat; and to provide opportunities for wildlife interpretation, outdoor recreation and environmental education. The designated wildlife observation areas and trails offer the best wildlife viewing opportunities for many species of wildlife. Pocosin Lakes NWR is one of more than 570 National Wildlife Refuges that protect over 100 million acres throughout the United States. Come and enjoy the natural beauty on your National Wildlife Refuge!

## Habitat and History

Pocosin wetlands, also called southeastern shrub bogs, are at a slightly higher elevation than the surrounding landscape and have deep organic soils called peat. The organic soil is made up of leaves, sticks, and other organic matter that accumulates and decomposes slowly over time. The peat soil acts as a sponge, holding water and releasing it very slowly. It can take over 100 years to create approximately one inch of peat soil. Pocosin habitats are fire-adapted ecosystems. Many of the plant species that occur in pocosins require fire to release new seeds and provide conditions to allow new growth.

Pocosin Lakes NWR was established in 1990 when The Conservation Fund, in conjunction with the Richard King Mellon Foundation, donated over 93,000 acres to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The adjacent 12,000 acre Pungo NWR, established in 1963 to serve as an inviolate waterfowl sanctuary, was combined with these new refuge lands and became the Pungo Unit of Pocosin Lakes NWR.

Prior to becoming a wildlife refuge, thousands of acres of pocosin wetlands were severely degraded by an extensive canal and ditch system that was used to drain these wetlands for timber harvest, agriculture, pasture and peat mining. Draining the wetlands also dried out the peat soils, making the lands much more susceptible to catastrophic wildfires and ground fire. Since 1990, the refuge has been restoring the natural hydrology to re-wet the pocosins. This will provide for a healthy wetland; improve wildlife habitat and water quality; and sequester (store) tons of carbon and nitrogen that would have otherwise been released into the atmosphere and waterways.

## Refuge Management

The refuge staff works to provide high-quality habitat conditions for a variety of wildlife. Habitat management actions include cooperative farming, moist soil management, invasive species management, hydrology restoration, prescribed burning, water management and wildfire protection and suppression.

## Wildlife

More than 300 different wildlife species, including the endangered red wolf and red-cockaded woodpecker, inhabit the refuge. During the winter months on the Pungo Unit, visitors can observe tens of thousands of tundra swans, snow geese, Canada geese and a variety of duck species. Numerous wading birds, shorebirds, neotropical migratory songbirds and birds of prey (including the bald eagle) utilize the refuge. Abundant black bears and deer are easily observed roaming and foraging on the refuge. Other species that can be found on the refuge include river otters, bobcats, gray and red foxes, five-lined skinks, green tree frogs, yellow-bellied sliders, and canebrake rattlesnakes. Please see the refuge's wildlife list for more information.

## Things to Do

- Wildlife observation and wildlife photography.
- Hunting and fishing (please refer to our annual hunting and fishing brochure for more information).
- Environmental education and interpretation (you can find more information on these opportunities on our website or at our Visitor Center in Columbia, North Carolina).

## Regulations

- The refuge is open for daylight use only. (30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset).
- Refuge roads open to vehicles are for licensed vehicles only; state and federal traffic regulations apply.
- Please abide by all refuge regulatory signs.
- Unless otherwise posted, the speed limit on all refuge roads is 25 mph.
- All domestic pets (dogs, cats, etc.) must be properly confined or leashed and under the owner's control at all times. Please see the refuge's hunting and fishing brochure concerning the use of dogs for hunting.

## Prohibited Activities

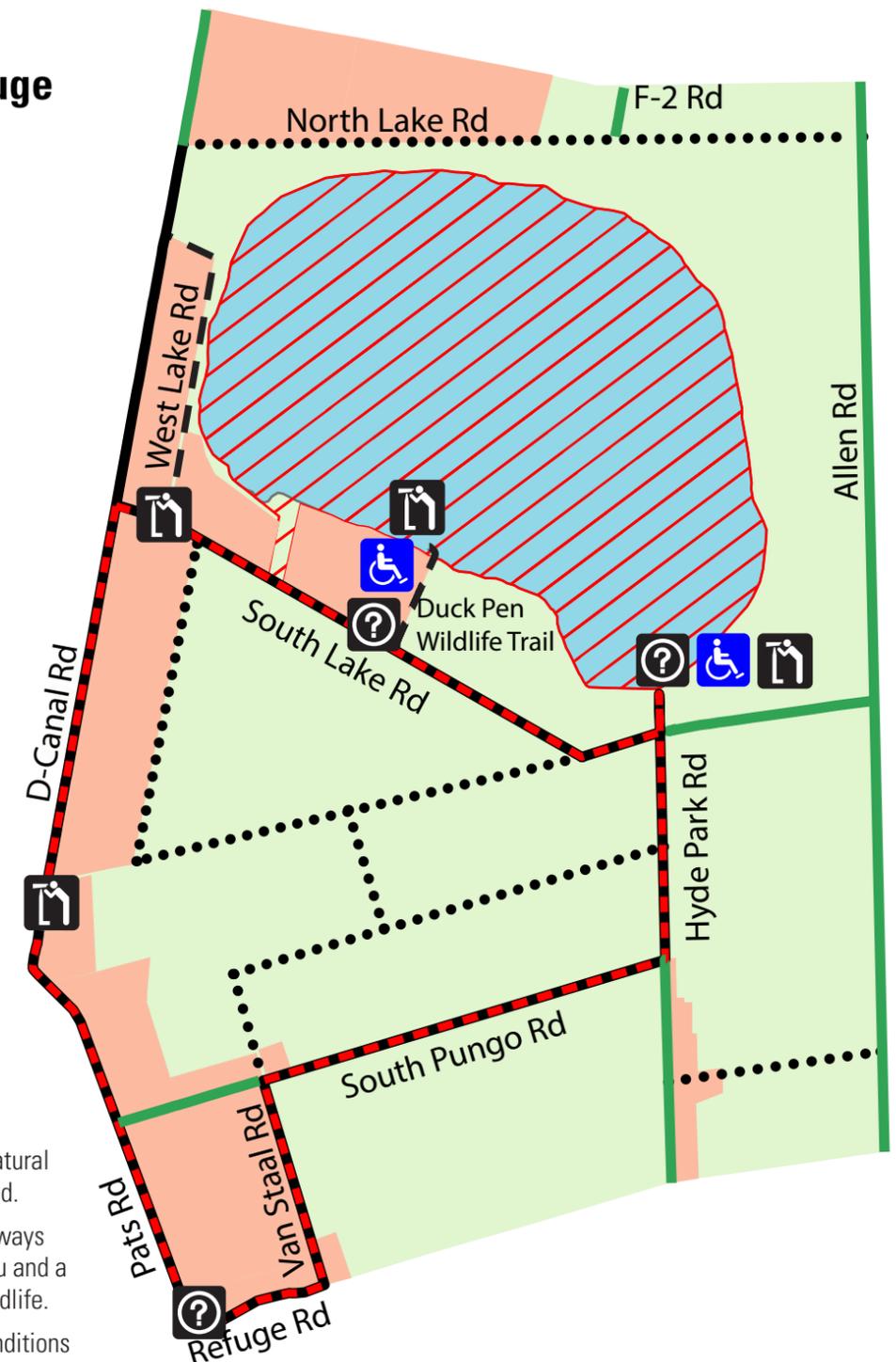
Entering closed areas, littering, fires, cutting and/or removing vegetation, taking or collecting plants, animals, flowers, nuts, berries, or any other items, baiting or feeding wildlife, public use of drones, blocking gate access or the free movement of vehicles, placing trail cameras, riding non-street legal all terrain vehicles (ATV's) except as provided for in our hunting regulations, and all commercial activities.

## Safety

- Biting insects and ticks are numerous along trails during summer months. Use of insect repellent is advised.
- Many black bears roam throughout the refuge. If you encounter a bear, never run. Instead of running, let the bear know you are there by backing up slowly while waving your arms above your head and speaking loudly. For your safety, keep at least 100 yards away from large wildlife, including bears.

## Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge

- Trail (Open Year-Round)
- ..... Seasonal Trail
- Refuge Road
- Wildlife Drive
- Seasonal Road
- Highway
- State Road
- Seasonally Closed Area
- Closed Area
- Pocosin Lakes NWR
- Visitor Center
- Viewpoint
- Boat launch
- Accessible Area
- Information
- Red Wolf Center



- Poison ivy, venomous snakes, and other natural nuisances and hazards may be encountered.
- When observing wildlife on the refuge, always keep a minimum of 100 yards between you and a wild animal. Do not approach or chase wildlife.
- Refuge roads are unpaved and surface conditions vary greatly. Some unimproved dirt roads may become impassable at times. Please use good judgment and caution when driving on any refuge road. The refuge is not responsible for stuck vehicles. Make sure you have plenty of fuel. The nearest gas station may be up to twenty miles away.
- Tell a friend or relative where you are going and when to expect your return.

## For more information please contact:

Refuge Manager  
 Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge  
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 Columbia, North Carolina 27925  
 252/796 3004 ext. 234  
 pocosinlakes@fws.gov  
<http://www.fws.gov/pocosinlakes/>



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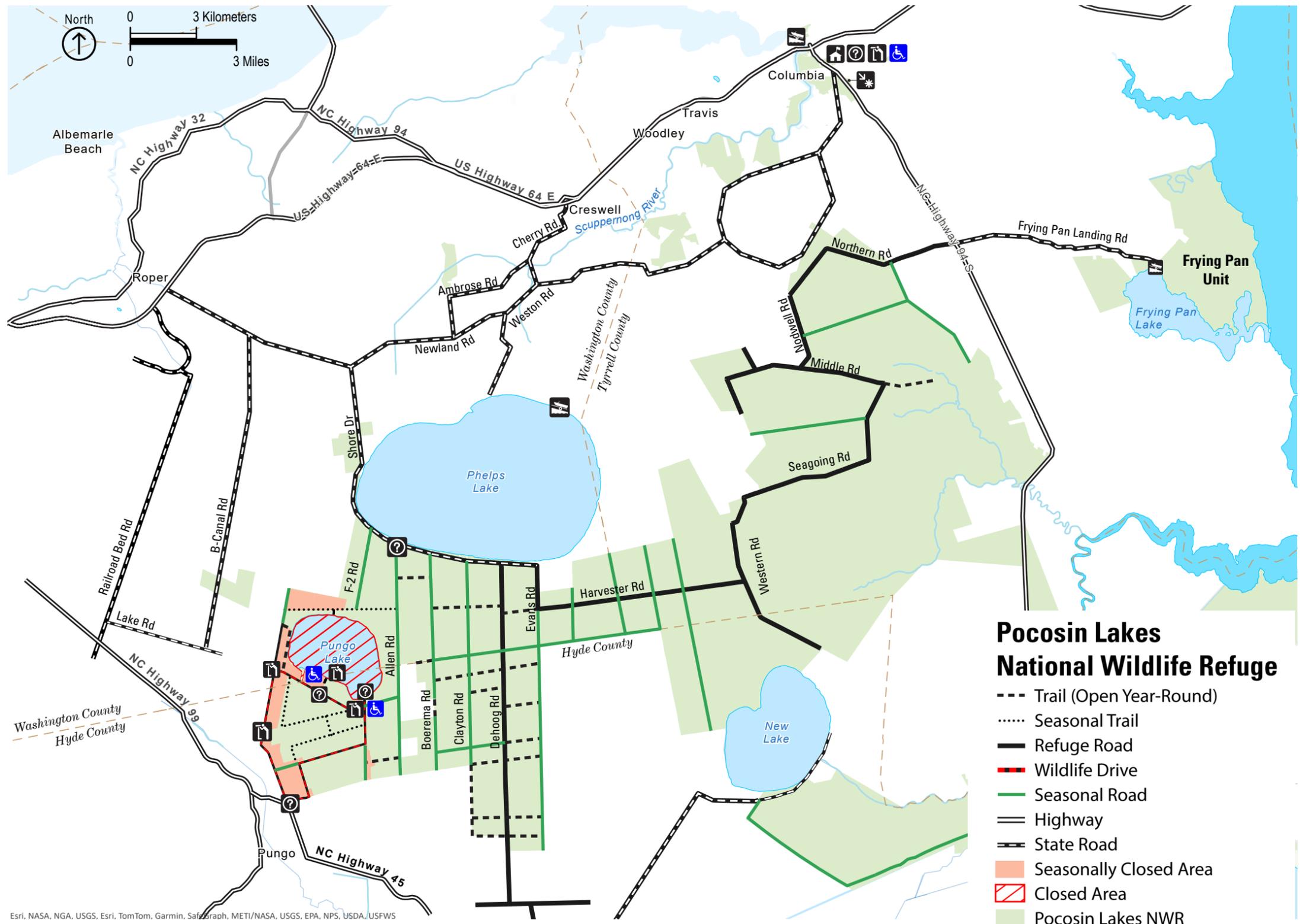
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