

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge Deer Hunting Regulations

2025–2026



Welcome

Bombay Hook was established in 1937 as a link in the chain of refuges extending from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. It is primarily a refuge and breeding ground for migrating birds and other wildlife. The value and importance of Bombay Hook for migratory bird protection and conservation has increased through the years, primarily due to the management of the refuge and the loss of high quality habitat along the Atlantic Flyway.

Accessibility Information

Equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from programs and activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is available to all individuals regardless of physical or mental ability. For more information please contact the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Opportunity, <https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/public-civil-rights>.

Hunters with a disability must obtain a certification card from Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). For information on obtaining this card, call the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife at 302-739-9912.

Wheelchair accessible stands are available for non-ambulatory hunters that possess an Interagency Access Pass. Individuals assisting non-ambulatory deer hunters in the Headquarters Area hunt are not permitted to hunt.

Firearms

Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuge System lands must comply with all provisions of State and local law. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in 50 CFR Part 32.)

We prohibit the use of rimfire or centerfire rifles and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols. The use or possession of buckshot while hunting is prohibited.

Vehicles

Licensed motor vehicles are permitted only on public use roads as shown on the map. ATVs and UTVs are prohibited. Hunters may park on roadsides no more than a vehicle width off the road. **Do Not Block the Road.** All State regulations and laws are applicable.

Boats

Watercraft may not be hunted from or used to access deer hunting locations.

Hunting Regulations

Hunting regulations are designed to provide safe recreational opportunities through wise use of renewable wildlife resources. Hunting and fishing are permitted in accordance with Federal regulations governing public use on National Wildlife Refuges as set forth in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Hunting will be in accordance with applicable State of Delaware regulations subject to the conditions stated below.

Permits

Hunters are required to possess a valid Delaware hunting license and all required stamps, valid government-issued photo identification, and a valid hunting permit issued by the refuge on their person at all times during refuge hunt and scout days.

Read and sign this brochure, it serves as your permit.

Hunter Orange

During all firearms hunting seasons, all hunters including archers must display a minimum of 400 square inches of hunter orange on the head, chest and back while hunting consisting of a vest and hat or jacket and hat.

Tree Stands

Portable tree stands, elevated platforms, and ground blinds may be used. All equipment must be removed at the end of each hunt day. The use of nails, wire, bolts, screws, screw-in steps, spikes, or other objects that may damage trees is prohibited. Remaining refuge stands are not maintained. Use at your own risk.

Scouting

Regular Areas deer scouting will be allowed the Saturday and Sunday before a season opening and on Sundays during daylight hours from September 1 - January 31. Headquarters scouting will be the Saturday and Sunday before the hunt date.

Guided Hunts

Hunt permit holders may not engage in guiding, outfitting, or advertising for commercial purposes.

Bombay Hook NWR Hunting Permit 2025 - 2026

When signed and carried, this serves as your permit for all refuge deer hunts and acknowledges your understanding of the regulations contained herein. Expires August 31, 2026

Signature (permits are not transferable)

Open to Hunting

Deer. Red fox and coyote may be taken incidentally while deer hunting.

Closed to Hunting

All other species of wildlife not listed above are protected.

Access

Open Areas -see map

Regular Area (RA), Fischer Tract (FT), and Steamboat Landing (SL) are the "Regular" deer areas. Regular Deer areas are open on a "first come" basis. Check in and out at the sign in boards located in the main parking area for each area.

Regular Area

The Regular Area is accessible via Dutch Neck Rd.

Fischer Tract

The Fischer Tract is accessible via Route 9 at Hawkey Branch Rd.

Steamboat Landing

Steamboat Landing is accessible via Donas Landing Rd.

South Upland Area

The South Upland Area is accessible via Marstown Rd.

Headquarters Deer permits will be issued for specific dates and areas. There are no other hunts in the Headquarters area.

We require hunters to notify a refuge representative and receive permission from the refuge manager or designee prior to entering a closed area or safety zone to retrieve game.

Days & Times

The refuge is open for hunting access from 2 hours before legal hunting time to 1 hour after legal hunting time on **designated days** (see table). **There is no Sunday hunting.**

South Upland Area

The South Upland Area is open during all state seasons except the Late Handgun season. Access is managed by the Little Creek Hunt Check Station in cooperation with the State. A daily lottery is held 1 ½ hours before legal shooting time and at 12 noon at the Little Creek Check Station. Hunters are advised to arrive 15 minutes prior to the lottery. No refuge fees are charged to hunt in this area, but State fees may apply.

Activity	Season	Open Areas	Special Regulations
Archery Deer	September 1 - January 31	RA, FT, SL	State regulations apply. All State approved archery equipment is allowed.
Muzzleloader Deer	October 10, 11,13,14,17,18	RA, FT, SL	State regulations apply.
	January 29, 30,31	FT, SL	All access to Regular area units is via Dutch Neck Rd. No Sunday Hunting.
Shotgun Deer	November 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22 January 17, 23, 24	RA, FT, SL	No centerfire rifles
Antlerless Deer	December 13, 15, 16, 19, 20	FT, SL	
Disabled/ Youth Deer	September 27 November 1	FT, SL	
Headquarters Deer	October 10 -Muzzleloader November 14 -Shotgun December 17 -Antlerless	H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6	State regulations apply.
State hunting regulations and licensing requirements apply to all hunting on the refuge. Shooting hours and methods of take may differ from the state. Signed refuge hunt brochure must be in possession of hunter. Upon request, hunters and their assistants must display for inspection all licenses, permits, game, equipment, weapons, and ammunition, to Federal and State law enforcement officers.			

Headquarters Deer Hunts October 10th, November 14th & December 17th.

There will be a preseason lottery to issue permits. To participate, complete an application (available online (www.fws.gov/refuge/bombay-hook/visit-us/activities/hunting) or at the refuge office) and mail it in to or drop it off at the refuge office. You must be at least 16 years old to obtain a Bombay Hook Headquarters Deer Permit. Permits will be issued in 6 zones in the Headquarters Deer Hunt Area. Standby hunters may sign up for no show spots or signed out spots after 9am. Youth under the age of 16 may hunt with a permitted adult (21 years or older) from the same stand/blind during the Headquarters hunts. If selected you will be mailed a postcard permit for the hunt. Bring this card with you on the hunt day.

Youth hunt

Any youth from 10 years through 15 years old may participate in the designated Youth Hunt. Youth hunters must be accompanied and assisted by an adult 21 years of age or older. Adult assistants must possess a valid Delaware hunting license or LEN. Adult assistants shall not possess a firearm or other hunting device during the hunt. Hunters 13 -15 years of age must have completed a hunter education course and possess a certification card and must also purchase a Delaware junior hunting license. Adult assistants must remain within 5 feet, maintaining close visual and verbal contact, providing adequate direction to, and can immediately assume control of the firearm from the youth hunter.

**Bombay Hook
National Wildlife Refuge**
2591 Whitehall Neck Rd
Smyrna, DE 19977
302-653-9345

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1-800-344-WILD
July 2025



Prohibited Activities

By law, recreational activities on national wildlife refuges are prohibited unless expressly permitted.

Please check with the office if you have questions.

- Entering hunt areas without possessing authorized hunt permits.
- Hunting and scouting outside designated days.
- The use of rimfire or centerfire rifles and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols.
- The use or possession of buckshot while hunting.
- Use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages or other intoxicating substances while hunting.
- Permanent tree stands, nails, screw-in steps, or other items that penetrate the outer bark of a tree.
- Building or maintaining any structure on the refuge.
- Leaving any property unattended.
- Cutting and damaging vegetation/trees or the use of cut vegetation/trees or organic material as camouflage for any purpose.
- Access to the refuge from private or state property.
- Distribution of bait or hunting with the aid of bait, including any grain, salt, minerals and other substances that are consumed.
- Hunting within 150 yards of any public use facility or hunting in designated safety zones as shown on hunting maps.
- Littering.
- Leaving deer entrails or other waste within 50 feet of any trail, road, or refuge structure.
- Driving or pushing deer.
- Dogs may not be used to hunt or pursue deer.
- Shooting from, across or down any designated refuge road.
- Target shooting or shooting for any purpose other than legal in season hunting.
- Parking in front of or blocking gates.
- Camping and fires.
- Searching for or removal of any natural items such as antlers, skulls, plants, historic, and archaeological features.
- Use of electronic or photographic trail/game monitoring devices.
- Use of drones.

Potential Disturbance

Due to an ongoing research project biologists may be present in the Steamboat Landing unit.

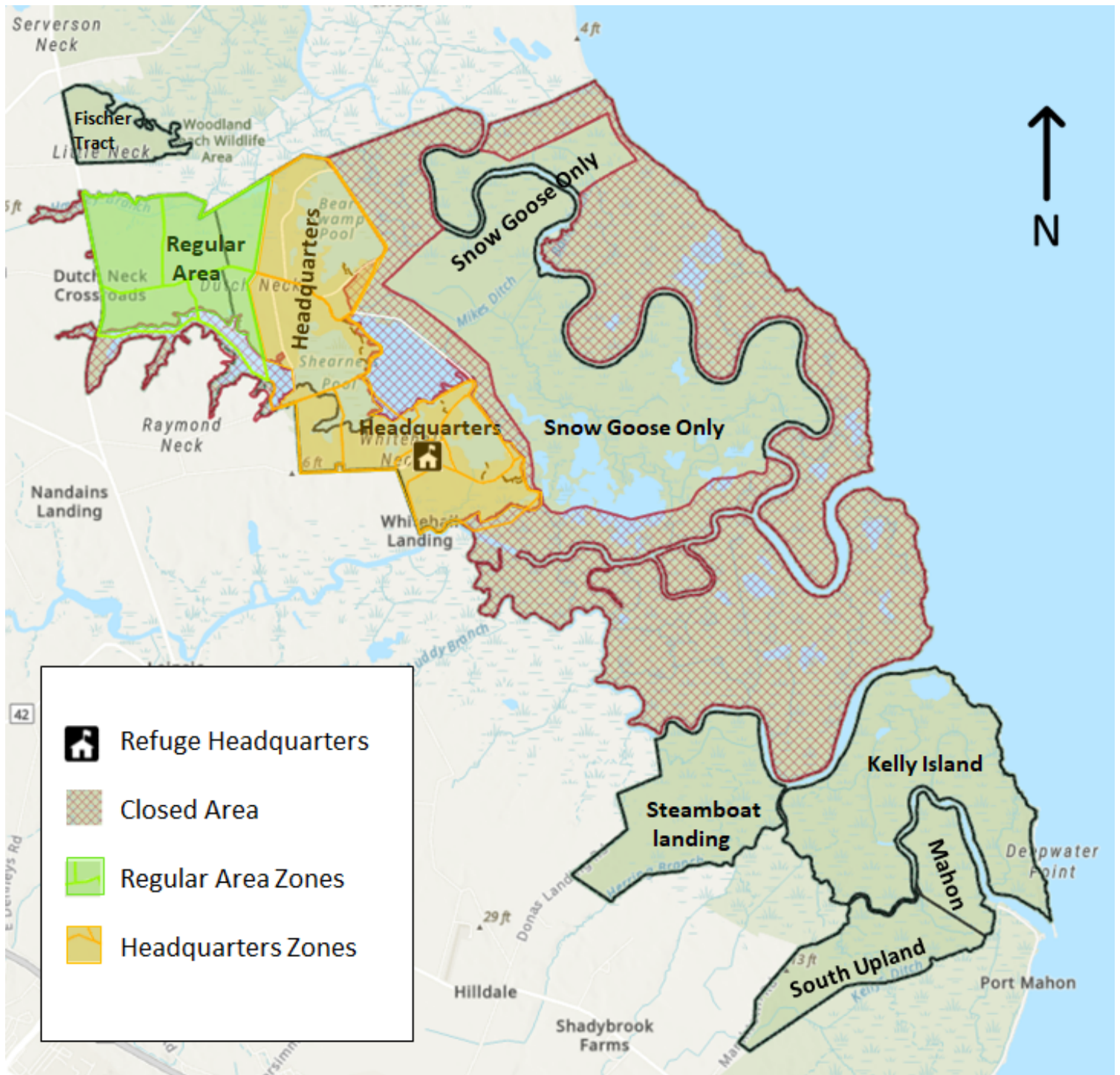
Work will be confined to the marsh areas in the Southern part of the unit. Researchers will be wearing orange vests and will wait until after 9am to enter the area on hunt days to minimize disturbance.



Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge

Hunt Unit Map

See supplementary maps for more detailed information.



THIS MAP IS FOR REFERENCE PURPOSES ONLY. THE BOUNDARY LINES SHOWN ARE APPROXIMATE. FOR BOUNDARY LINE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE REFUGE OFFICE. PLEASE OBSERVE AND ADHERE TO ALL POSTED AREAS REFER TO REFUGE HUNTING REGULATIONS FOR AVAILABLE HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDING HUNT DATES AND HUNT AREAS