

Appendix J: Public Use Regulations

Public Use Regulations

The refuge is home to fish and wildlife and you are the guest. Certain regulations are necessary to protect wildlife and to provide you with a safe and enjoyable experience.

Alcohol

Entering or remaining on the refuge when under the influence of alcohol is prohibited. Possession or use of alcoholic beverages by persons under 21 years of age is prohibited.

Boating

Boats may not be left unattended on the refuge for over 72 hours. Mooring within 200 feet of refuge boat landings, or in any areas posted with restrictive signs or buoys is prohibited. Boats left unattended or moored in violation may be impounded at the owner's expense.

Campfires

Campfires are allowed using only dead wood on the ground, or materials brought onto the refuge such as charcoal or firewood. Building fires at, or in proximity to, any developed facilities, or at any areas posted with restrictive signs is prohibited. Developed facilities include, but are not limited to, structures, boat landings, access areas, parking lots, roads, trails, etc. Building, attending, maintaining, or using any fire without sufficient clearance from flammable materials adequate to prevent its escape is not allowed.

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, tires, other refuse, etc.

Camping

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 one half (1/2) mile away from the previous site. Leaving tents, camping equipment, boats, 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, you must remove all traces before departure. Camping at, or in proximity to, any developed facilities, or at any areas posted with restrictive signs is prohibited. Developed facilities include, but are not limited to, structures, boat landings, access areas, parking lots, roads, trails, etc.

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

Collecting

All plants, animals, and objects of antiquity, such as arrowheads, are protected. Disturbing or collecting is prohibited, except by special use permit.

Domestic Animals

Unconfined domestic animals are prohibited on the refuge, except for controlled hunting and retrieving dogs during the hunting season.

Firearms

Carrying, possessing, or discharging firearms 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.

Fireworks

Possession or use of fireworks or explosives is not allowed on the refuge.

Fishing

Fishing is allowed in accordance with state and federal regulations. On Spring Lake Closed Area (Pool 13), fishing is prohibited from October 1 until the day after the close of the Illinois duck hunting season. On Mertes Slough (Pool 6), only hand-powered boats or boats with electric motors are allowed.

Group Events

A refuge permit is required to hold public meetings, assemblies, demonstrations, parties, organized group events, and other public gatherings, whether or not an entrance fee is charged.

Hunting and Trapping

Portions of the refuge are open to hunting and trapping in accordance with federal, state, and local regulations. Contact the refuge office for special regulations which apply. You may possess only approved nontoxic shot while in the field, except when hunting turkey and deer. You may use slugs and shot containing lead to hunt these species only. Use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.

Trappers must have a federal refuge trapping permit in addition to a state trapping license, and trap in accordance with state laws and refuge trapping permit conditions.

On areas posted No Hunting Zone, all hunting is prohibited. Trapping is only allowed beginning the day after the close of the state duck hunting season until season closure or March 15, whichever occurs first.

On areas posted Area Closed, hunting of migratory birds is prohibited. Other hunting and trapping is only allowed beginning the day after the close of the state duck hunting season until season closure or March 15, whichever occurs first, except spring turkey hunting is allowed during state seasons.

On areas open to hunting, hunting and trapping are prohibited from March 16 until the opening of state fall hunting seasons, except spring turkey hunting is allowed during state seasons.

Private Structures

Private structures of any kind are not allowed on the refuge without a special use permit, except for temporary duck blinds.

Sanitation

All public use sites must be kept clean during the period of use or occupancy. You must keep all refuse, trash, and litter contained in bags or other suitable containers, and not left scattered on the ground or in the water at any time. All public use sites must be left clean upon departure. You must remove all personal property, refuse, trash, and litter immediately upon vacating a site. Disposing of any materials on the refuge by burying or other methods is prohibited.

Vegetation

Cutting, removing, or damaging any tree or other vegetation, standing or down, live or dead, is prohibited, without a written permit, except that willow may be used for trap stakes, commercial fishing gear, and hunting blinds on the refuge. Dead wood on the ground may be cut and used for campfires on the refuge.

Vehicles

All off-road vehicles are prohibited, including snowmobiles and wheeled or tracked all-terrain vehicles, on or across refuge lands at anytime, 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 may not obstruct or impede any road, trail, fire lane, boat ramp, access gate, or other facilities. Parking in a manner to create a safety hazard, or endanger any person, property, or environmental feature is prohibited. Vehicles left parked in violation may be impounded at the owner's expense.

This is only a partial listing of Refuge public use regulations. Additional regulations are published in the Code of Federal Regulations Title 50, Subchapter C, The National Wildlife Refuge System.

