

News Release

Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Block Island NWR □ John H. Chafee NWR at Pettaquamscutt Cove □ Ninigret NWR □ Sachuest Point NWR □ Truston Pond NWR



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RHODE ISLAND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX OFFERS EXPANDED DEER HUNTING OPPORTUNITIES

Effective this fall, hunters will now find expanded White-tailed Deer hunting opportunities in Rhode Island due to the implementation of the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex's hunt program. One unit on the Ninigret NWR and four units on the Block Island NWR will be open for hunting by special permit only.

The Ninigret Pond Unit of the Ninigret NWR will be open for a special youth only hunt December 7-22, 2013 as well as an Archery Season December 28, 2013 – January 31, 2014. All youth hunters (12-17 yrs old) selected are required to attend a hunt orientation prior to participating in the refuge hunt. The orientation will be held November 30 at the Kettle Pond Visitor Center in Charlestown, RI. The Ninigret NWR Youth Deer Hunt is a mentorship event, utilizing the experiences of adults to assist and introduce youth to the outdoors and the use of hunting as a big game management tool. The adult mentor must accompany all youth hunters during the hunt and at the hunt orientation.

Block Island NWR units will open for shotgun, archery and muzzleloader hunting in January and February, excluding weekends. There will also be a unit accessible for people with disabilities. For further information and questions, please contact the refuge headquarters at 401-364-9124 or visit the website at <http://www.fws.gov/ninigret/complex>. Special permits are available at <http://www.rhodeislandpermits.com>.

The refuge's hunting program is part of the Complex's approved deer management plan. Refuge-specific hunting regulations will be implemented to facilitate a safe and quality hunt that incorporates the safety and concerns of the general public as well as refuge neighbors.

The refuge's hunting program follows strategies identified to help meet multiple objectives:

- Deer hunting will provide the public an opportunity to safely enjoy an American pastime, which is a priority recreational use of the National Wildlife Refuge System, and provide a means to control deer populations in cooperation with State objectives and regulations.

- Reducing deer densities may reduce the abundance of deer ticks that harbor diseases, such as Lyme disease, which can affect public health.
- Reducing the adverse effects deer can have on native plant communities. This is particularly important because of the very high use migrating songbirds make of the national wildlife refuges during the fall migration.

Staff at the Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex have been working over the past several years in partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management to prepare a Hunt Plan and accompanying environmental assessment that will allow recreational hunting on select lands owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within Rhode Island.

As Jason Osenkowski, deputy chief of DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife says, "It is exciting to see these new opportunities come about with the coordinated efforts of our agencies, and providing these opportunities for youth hunters will strengthen the strong hunting ethic with the next generation of conservationists."

Some people are surprised to learn that hunting is allowed on a national wildlife refuge, but these lands have been established not only to preserve wild places, but also to promote wildlife-dependent recreation when compatible with the purposes for which the refuges were established. As one of the oldest, most traditional recreational uses of renewable natural resources, hunting has been a popular activity within the National Wildlife Refuge System since its creation over a century ago. Refuges often depend on hunting as a beneficial tool to assist in the management of wildlife populations on our public lands. Today, more than 300 of our nation's refuges provide hunting opportunities to their visitors. All national wildlife refuges in the State are open to fishing, and goose and dove hunting is also allowed on a portion of the Trustom Pond National Wildlife Refuge in South Kingstown.

The Rhode Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a diverse network of lands managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that includes 556 national wildlife refuges and more than 150 million acres of public lands and waters set aside for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants. The Refuge System works to foster public awareness and appreciation of the natural world through wildlife-dependant recreation, including wildlife observation and photography, environmental education and interpretation, fishing and hunting.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is, working with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service is both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation. Visit www.fws.gov to learn more.

For additional information, contact Deputy Refuge Manager Juancarlos Giese at 401-364-9124, extension 18.