

# **Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge**

## **2025-26 Waterfowl Hunting Regulations and Dates**

[Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge \(NWR\)](#) is part of the Chesapeake Marshlands NWR Complex. It is one of over 570 NWRs in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The primary objective of the System is to provide habitat for the conservation and protection of wildlife. The regulations listed here supplement the general regulations which govern hunting on NWRs set forth in [Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations](#). Failure to abide by any laws or regulations may result in the revocation of the permit and hunting privileges.

### **REFUGE REGULATIONS**

- We only allow hunters to access hunt sites by boat; the use of air boats, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), or amphibious vehicles of any type (including Argos), is prohibited.
- Dogs must be controlled while on refuge property when not actively retrieving.
- Use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting is prohibited.
- The removal or cutting of any vegetation on the refuge is prohibited.
- Use of natural vegetation in any manner is strictly prohibited.
- All hunt blind materials and decoys must be removed at the end of each hunting day.
- We require all hunters in a hunt party to only hunt within their assigned hunt unit.
- Hunters may only use temporary blinds and blind materials.
- Hunters may not access the refuge before 4 a.m.
- Commercial guiding is prohibited.
- **Legal hunting hours are one half hour before sunrise to 2:00 pm (ET).**

### **PERMIT LICENSE REQUIREMENTS**

Each hunter must have the following in his/her possession and display them upon request of any FWS employee or MD Natural Resources Police officer:

1. Valid Maryland State waterfowl hunting license, Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp), and State Waterfowl Stamp.
2. Valid government issued photo identification.
3. Electronic or signed hard copy of the refuge hunt permit.

### **PERMIT GUIDELINES**

- Reservations are made through the [Recreation.gov](#) website.
- The maximum hunt party size is four.
- The individual whose name is on the permit must be present in the hunt party on the day of the hunt.
- An individual may only purchase one permit per reservation but can reserve up to two units per week if available.
- The hunter who made the reservation may have an electronic refuge permit on their phone. All additional hunters in the party must print, read, and sign the permit of the hunter who made the reservation.
- The permit will only be valid for that specific unit and day.
- All waterfowl hunt related information must be obtained from [Hunting Page of the Blackwater NWR website](#).

## **HUNTING DAYS**

Wednesdays and Saturdays only.

Early Teal Season	September 20 <sup>th</sup> , 24 <sup>th</sup> , 27 <sup>th</sup> , 2025
First Split	October 11 <sup>th</sup> , 15 <sup>th</sup> , 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2025
Second Split	November 15 <sup>th</sup> , 19 <sup>th</sup> , 22 <sup>nd</sup> , 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2025
Third Split	December 17 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup> , 24 <sup>th</sup> , 27 <sup>th</sup> , 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2025 January 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> , 17 <sup>th</sup> , 21 <sup>st</sup> , 24 <sup>th</sup> , 28 <sup>th</sup> , 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2026
Youth, Veteran, and Military Hunt Days	Nov. 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2025 and Feb. 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2026

## **HUNT UNIT RESERVATION**

Reservations for hunt units open at 10 a.m. ET, the Monday prior to the week of the hunt on [Recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) (see below). The system will close at 3 p.m. ET on the last hunt day of that week. If offered and available, you may select up to two units per week. Each unit selected will be a separate reservation fee of \$6.00.

<b>Reservation opens on this date:</b>	<b>For this date(s):</b>
Sept. 8	Sept. 20
Sept. 15	Sept. 24 and 27
Sept. 29	Oct. 11
Oct. 6	Oct. 15 and 18
Nov. 3	Nov. 15
Nov. 10	Nov. 19 and 22
Nov. 17	Nov. 26
Dec. 8	Dec. 17 and 20
Dec. 15	Dec. 24 and 27
Dec. 22	Dec. 31 and Jan. 3
Dec. 29	Jan. 7 and 10
Jan. 5	Jan. 14 and 17
Jan. 12	Jan. 21 and 24
Jan. 19	Jan. 28 and 31
<b>Youth, Veteran, and Military Waterfowl Hunt Days</b>	
<b>Reservation opens on this date:</b>	<b>For this date:</b>
Oct. 20	Nov. 1
Jan. 26	Feb. 7

## **AVAILABLE HUNT UNITS**

<b>Refuge Interior Units</b>	<b>Chesapeake Bay Units</b>	<b>Nanticoke River Units</b>
Blackwater River East	Spring Island East	Nanticoke 1
Blackwater River Central	Spring Island West	Nanticoke 2
Blackwater River West	Bishop's Head East	Nanticoke 3
Beaverdam Creek East	Bishop's Head West	Nanticoke 4
Beaverdam Creek West		Nanticoke 5
Goose Dam Creek North		Marshyhope 1
Goose Dam Creek South		Marshyhope 2

**Scout dates** are the following Sundays:

Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, Oct. 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>, Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, and Jan. 4<sup>th</sup>.

Other than the refuge permit, hunters must meet the Permit License Requirements for scouting.

### **ACCESS**

Hunt units are only permitted to be accessed by boat. Hunters are strongly encouraged to scout hunt units on designated scout dates. Scouting may only be done from a boat. Individuals scouting the Goose Dam Creek hunt units will be allowed on land at the Parsons Creek dam only for the purpose of portaging their boat.

In the event that ice, low water, or any other natural events prohibit access to hunt areas, no alternate hunt unit or hunt day will be made available.

**Waterfowl hunting maps and photos of access points can be found on [Blackwater NWR's Library Page](#).**

### **ACCESS POINTS**

- The Blackwater River hunt units are accessed from the refuge car top boat launch on Route 335.
- The Beaverdam Creek hunt units are accessed from the east side of Smithville Road near the Smithville Public Boat Launch.
- The Goose Dam Creek hunt units are accessed from the southwest side of the Route 16 Bridge at Parsons Creek (please note that boats must be portaged over a small dam to reach the blind locations). Canoes/kayaks are recommended due to shallow water and tree stumps in the creek.
- The Nanticoke and Marshyhope units can be accessed with a trailered boat from the Cherry Beach Park boat launch in Sharptown, MD or the public boat launch in Vienna, MD.
- The Spring Island and Bishop's Head hunt units are Chesapeake Bay island sites and can be accessed with a larger boat from a launch of your choice.

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