

Prime Hook

National Wildlife Refuge Waterfowl Hunting Regulations 2023–2024



Welcome

Established in 1963, Prime Hook is an important stopover site for migratory birds as they travel the Atlantic Flyway and provides protected breeding habitat for federally and State-listed threatened and endangered species, as well as many neo-tropical migrating bird species. Prime Hook's habitat features include salt marsh, freshwater marsh, ponds, wooded swamps, upland grasslands and forest.

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/eoo/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.

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.)

Vehicles

Licensed motor vehicles are permitted only on public use roads and trails as shown on the map. ATVs and UTVs are prohibited. Hunters must park in designated parking areas, as identified on the map below, to access the Refuge for hunting. All State regulations and laws are applicable.

Scouting

Waterfowl scouting is allowed the Saturday and Sunday prior to the start of each season segment when there is not an open hunt occurring and every Sunday throughout the season. See table for season dates.

Boats

All hunters are required to operate their craft and possess all safety equipment in accordance with Delaware State and U.S. Coast Guard regulations.

- The maximum horsepower allowed for boat motors is 30 HP. All open refuge waters are slow, no wake zones.
- Designated launching sites must be used to launch boats.
- The use of air-thrust or inboard water-thrust boats on refuge waters is prohibited
- Boat access to Slaughter and Prime Hook Creeks is prohibited.
- Access to the lottery waterfowl hunting area is by boat only and hunters must use designated launching sites to launch their boats.
- Mud motors are recommended due to low water conditions.

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.

The hunt check station has moved. The new location is 500 yards down the refuge entry road on the right side.

Permits

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

Prime Hook NWR Hunting Permit 2023—2024

When signed and carried, this serves as your permit for all refuge waterfowl hunts and acknowledges your understanding of the regulations contained herein. Expires August 31, 2024

Signature (permits are not transferable)

Hunts offered

Waterfowl: Permits will be available for the

September Teal and Resident Canada Goose season, Youth and Non-Ambulatory days, all 3 splits of Regular duck, and both splits of late Canada Goose.

Open to Hunting - Ducks, geese, coots.

Closed to Hunting - All other species of wildlife not listed above are protected. Protected species include, but are not limited to, snakes, crow, beaver, otter, and muskrat.

Access

Areas -see map

The only areas open to waterfowl hunting are the lottery waterfowl area, the walk-in area south of Prime Hook Rd, and Island Farm disabled hunt area.

Days - Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday during designated seasons. There is no Sunday hunting.

Hours - The refuge is open for hunting access from 2 hours before legal hunting time to 1 hour after legal hunting time. Waterfowl hunts conclude at 3:00 pm. All hunters and assistants must exit the hunting areas by 4:00pm

Seasonal Closures

Island Farm unit is closed to all access from February 1st - August 31st

On January 18, 2024 refuge Headquarters waterfowl hunting access will be closed due to Headquarters Area Deer Hunt.

Guided Hunts

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

Activity	Season	Harvest	Hunt	Regulations
Lottery Waterfowl	Sep 1-25, 2023 -Resident Canada Goose Sep 13 - Sep 30, 2023 -Sept Teal Oct 21, 2023 - Youth Hunt October 27 -November 4 Nov 20 - Nov 25, 2023 -Regular Duck/ Canada Goose	State and Federal limits apply. Ducks, geese, and coots, including mergansers and gallinules. Mute swans may be taken during any open waterfowl season.	Lottery Waterfowl hunt area specific blind sites	Refuge-issued permit is required in addition to the proper state licenses.
Walk-In Waterfowl	Dec 9 - Jan 31, 2024 -Regular Duck Dec 16 - Jan 30, 2024 - Canada Goose Feb 3, 2024 -Youth Hunt There is no Sunday hunting on the refuge.		Walk-In hunt area specific blind sites	State and Federal Waterfowl Stamps required.
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.				

Procedures for Hunter Facilitated Drawing: At the hunt check station the morning of the hunt, each hunting party will completely fill out a waterfowl hunting permit, fold it in half, and place it in the provided bucket. All members of the hunting party must be present at the drawing or at the time of self-service. Hunters may not reserve blinds or obtain permits for other hunting parties. The names of all occupants of the blind/blind-site and contact information for one hunter must be written on the permit prior to the morning drawing or before hunting if the permit is claimed by first-come, first-serve procedures after the drawing.

Two hours before shooting time, permits are picked one at a time out of the bucket by a willing hunter from the crowd. Hunters may select blind-sites from the tag board in the order that the party was selected from the bucket. Hunters must sign out a blind or blind-site by turning over the appropriate tag from green (available) to red (in use) and write the number on your permit in the "Hunt Location Choices" section. Place white copy of permit in "permit" slot. Keep yellow copy of permit on your person and return the permit to the check station after hunting. **Flip your tag back to green when your hunt is over** Permits must be turned in at the check station by 4:00 PM. The questionnaire portion on the permit must be filled out after the hunt. When leaving the blind unoccupied for any reason, the permit must be turned in and a new permit must be completely filled out at the check station before hunting again

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.

**Prime Hook
National Wildlife Refuge**
11978 Turtle Pond Road,
Milton, DE 19968
302-684-8419

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1-800-344-WILD
July 2023



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 feathers, carcasses, or other waste within 50 feet of any trail, road, or refuge structure.
- 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 monitoring devices.
- Use of drones.

Harvest Reporting

In addition to the required reporting to the Migratory Bird Harvest Information Program (HIP), hunters must complete a Migratory Bird Hunt Report (FWS Form 3-2361) and return it to the refuge by email (fw5rw_phnwr@fws.gov), or by mail (11978 Turkle Pond Rd, Milton, DE 19968) regardless of whether you were successful. Both forms are available at the refuge headquarters and hunter check station.

Lottery Waterfowl Area

Includes 1 blind and 6 blind-sites on the federal refuge and 7 stationary blinds in the State-owned Prime Hook Wildlife Area. Blinds #1-7 on the state-owned Prime Hook Wildlife Area and blind sites #'s 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 & stationary blind #25 on the federal refuge will be open to waterfowl hunting during the 2023-2024 hunting season.

The issuance of the Prime Hook Daily Lottery Hunting Permits for these hunt areas will be managed by Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge through a daily standby, hunter-facilitated, lottery drawing conducted 2 hours before shooting time at the refuge's check station followed by self-service until 12:00 noon. Hunters must not be on the refuge any earlier than 3 hours before shooting time to begin signing up for the lottery drawing. Access to the hunt area is available via the boat ramp at Foord's Landing. The Headquarters Area boat ramp is closed.

The **Walk-in waterfowl** blind-site hunt area located south of Prime Hook Beach Road (see map), is a Lottery Waterfowl Hunt Area. Five hunt areas will be available (up to three hunters per area) and a 12 vehicle limit in the designated parking area. Walk-in Blind-site hunters must be within 20 feet of each other while hunting. AREA IS FOOT ACCESS ONLY.





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