

2025-2026 Lake Ophelia NWR Hunting, Fishing, and Public Use

Central Louisiana NWR Special Recreational Activity Permits are \$20. Our Special Recreational Activity Permit may also be purchased on-line for \$20 at <https://CentralLA.RecAccess.com>

RecAccess accepts all major credit cards. All hunters are encouraged to purchase permits on-line.

The Refuge

Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge, established in 1988 primarily to preserve wintering and breeding habitat for waterfowl, is located in the Red River floodplain in east central Louisiana, approximately 10 miles north-east of Marksville. Public hunting and fishing is permitted on approximately 12,000 acres during specific times of the year.

Individuals utilizing the refuge are subject to inspections of permits, licenses, hunting equipment, bag limits, boats, vehicles, and their contents by refuge officers.

To ensure your safety and enjoyment while visiting Lake Ophelia, please take the time to become familiar with the following regulations.

General Regulations

Hunting and fishing regulations are designed to protect the sportsman as well as wildlife populations. The regulations below govern hunting and fishing on national wildlife refuges as set forth in Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations. Hunting and fishing will be in accordance with applicable state regulations, except where otherwise stated.

The refuge is open to public access for the purposes of hunting from 4 am to two hours after sunset, with the exception of Lake Long Road, which is open to thru traffic 24-hours/day. The refuge boundary is marked with signs and yellow paint.

Weapons and Ammunition

Archery equipment and primitive firearms as defined by the State of Louisiana (LDWF) are permitted during the applicable Refuge hunt. **Youth hunters are not allowed to use modern firearms during Refuge primitive firearms hunts.** Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on Refuge must comply with all provisions of state and local laws. Refuge users

may only possess approved nontoxic shot while on the Refuge, with the exception that lead shot is allowed during turkey hunting season only. Pistols/handguns are not allowed for big or small game hunting.

Note: Use and/or possession of buckshot is prohibited. Possession of shot larger than that legal for waterfowl hunting is prohibited; use or possession of lead shot is prohibited refuge wide.

Exceptions

During quota deer and turkey hunts, lead ammunition legal for taking deer and turkey may be used. Small game may be hunted with up to a .22 magnum caliber rimfire rifle using lead ammunition during open seasons.

Permits

An annual Special Recreational Activity Permit is required for all hunters and fishermen 16 years old and older, and for all terrain vehicle (ATV) use on the refuge.

The Central LA NWR (\$20) Special Recreational Activity Permit applies to all refuges within the complex (Lake Ophelia, Grand Cote, and Catahoula). Permits are available at the Refuge headquarters located at Grand Cote National Wildlife Refuge, 401 Island Road, Marksville, LA 71351. Office hours are Monday through Friday 7:30 am to 4 pm, except on federal holidays when the office is closed. On weekdays and weekends, permits may be purchased at T-Town located at 5925 Highway 84, Jonesville, LA 71343.

Cash payment will no longer be accepted for permits obtained at the Refuge offices. Money Orders will be the only authorized form of payment at these locations.

Our Special Recreational Activity Permit may also be purchased on-line at <https://CentralLA.RecAccess.com>. All permits purchased on-line must be printed and in the hunter’s possession.

Refuge permits authorize participation in all refuge hunting and fishing activities. The permit must be signed and in your possession whenever hunting, fishing, or using an ATV on the refuge, and acknowledges your understanding of refuge regulations.

Lake Ophelia
National Wildlife Refuge
401 Island Road
Marksville, LA 71351
318/253 4238
<http://www.fws.gov/lakeophelia>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1 800/344 WILD

May 2025

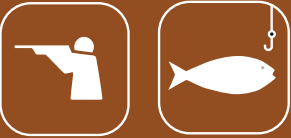
To:



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Lake Ophelia

National Wildlife Refuge Hunting, Fishing and Public Use Regulations 2025-2026



Commercial Activities

Commercial hunting and fishing activities are prohibited. Specifically, we prohibit any person or group acting as a hunting guide, outfitter, or in any other capacity that any other individual pays or promises to pay directly or indirectly for services rendered to any other person(s) hunting on the refuge, regardless of whether such payment is for guiding, outfitting, lodging or club membership.

Lottery Primitive Firearm Deer Hunts

January 3-4, and January 17-18

How to Apply for Deer Lottery Hunts

On-line Applications

Hunters are now required to apply for Deer Lottery Hunts on-line at **<https://CentralLA.RecAccess.com>**

During the application process you will be provided with an immediate account number. Please save this number for your records once your application is complete.

Paper applications are no longer accepted by mail or in person at The Central Louisiana Refuge Complex office in, Marksville, LA. Applications must be completed on-line at **<https://CentralLA.RecAccess.com>**

ATTENTION: All Deer Lottery Hunts require an application to be completed and processed online through RecAccess. Hunters may apply from August 1-31, 2025 at **<https://CentralLA.RecAccess.com>**

You must provide an email address when signing up. Additional instructions can be found on the website. Hunters will be notified of their drawing status on Friday September 5, 2025.

If you have any questions about the application process, visit at <https://CentralLA.RecAccess.com> for further step by step instructions.

Group Hunts

Two to five individuals may be processed as a group or a hunt party. Up to five individuals may apply in a group. Applicants will

only have to enter their hunt selection once during the process, but will need the name, address and email information for the other hunters in their group. Any on-line applications that are received separately will be treated as separate applications.

There is a \$5 application fee for each individual applying for a lottery hunt. Application fees must be in the form of credit card for on-line applications. You can combine application fees for each member into one payment. This fee is non-refundable and must be received with your application.

Completed on-line applications and the \$5 application fee must be submitted to RecAccess by close of business on August 31.

Permits are non-transferable and must be be printed and in the hunter’s possession at all times while on the refuge during the permitted hunt. Only hunters with valid lottery permits are permitted on the Refuge during Refuge lottery hunts.

**Lottery Youth Deer Hunts
December 6, and January 24**

There will be two lottery deer hunts for youths ages 12-15 (applicants must be 12 by the date of the hunt). A total of 20 youths will be selected (10 per hunt). Applicants previously selected are not eligible to apply.

Ten, three-man box stands will be provided. Each youth must be accompanied by one parent/guardian 21 years or older. A refuge staff/volunteer will also accompany each youth to their blind. Rifles will be allowed.

Spring Turkey Hunts (First 16 days of the State Season)
Turkey hunting is allowed until 12 noon. Hunt Areas 1B and 2B closed during turkey season. ATV’s are restricted to marked trails. The use of turkey gobbler/jake decoys and incidental hog hunting during refuge turkey season is prohibited. Harvested turkeys must be checked out at Self Clearing Check Station.

Motorized Vehicles

All motorized vehicles are restricted to roads that are delineated on the refuge map. The vehicle speed limit shall not exceed 25 mph, except as otherwise legally posted.

All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)

Use of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) is restricted to designated ATV trails. ATVs are allowed only for hunting, fishing, and other wildlife related activities. ATVs will not exceed 25 mph when driven on the Refuge. **The use of E-bikes and bicycles are allowed and restricted to designated ATV trails ONLY! No UTVs allowed!**

ATVs used on the Refuge will not to exceed the following: weight – 750 lbs., length – 85”, and width – 48”. ATV tires are restricted to those no larger than 28 X 12 with a maximum lug height of 1” and a maximum allowable tire pressure of 7 p.s.i. as indicated on the tire by the manufacturer. **ATV trails are open from September 1 through the last day of the Refuge turkey season.** Exceptions are the Duck Lake trail and the Westcut trail which are open to fisherman March 1-October 15.

Boats

Lake Ophelia (the lake itself) is open only during the Unit 1B archery deer season, only electric or non-motorized boats may be used in the lake. Scouting is allowed in Unit 1B starting September 1 when ATV trails open. Boats may not be left on the refuge overnight.

Lake Long, Possum Bayou (South of boat ramp), and Dooms Lake are open to boat access from September 1 through the last day of archery season and only electric or non-motorized boats may be used.

Duck, West Cut Lakes, Nicholas, Possum Bayou (North of boat ramp), Palmetto Bayou and Point Basse are open to boat access from September 1 through the last day of archery season and motors up to 35 horsepower may be used. ATV’s are allowed on these designated trails from March 1-October 15 for the purpose of fishing.

Prohibited Activities

The following activities are prohibited on Lake Ophelia National Wildlife Refuge:

- Possession or distribution of bait while in the field and hunting with the aid of bait, including any grain, salt, minerals, or any non-naturally occurring food attractant.
- **Hunting or the discharge of firearms within 150 feet from the centerline of roads, maintained trails, and utility right-of-ways is prohibited.**
- Use or possession of any type of material used as flagging or trail markers, except bright eyes or reflective tape.
- Use of pistols or handguns for hunting.
- Use or possession of alcoholic beverages while hunting.
- Littering or leaving personal items, other than what is identified in this brochure.
- Camping/overnight parking.
- Taking of wildlife, or parts of, or plants (including cutting trees or brush) other than specified in this brochure.
- Target practice.
- Trapping.
- Use of horses or mules.
- Fires.
- Spot-lighting – including the use of automobile/ATV artificial light may not be used to locate wildlife.
- Man-drives for deer or feral hogs.
- Crawfishing.
- Searching for or removing any object of antiquity including arrowheads, pottery or other artifacts.
- Blocking gates or roadways with vehicles or ATVs.
- Driving or screwing a nail, spike or other metal object into a tree or to hunt from any tree in which such an object has been driven; or using climbing spikes.
- Harvest of frogs, turtles, snakes, shells, or mollusks.
- Collection and removal of deer antlers.
- Use of remote cameras.
- Use of deer or turkey gobbler decoys.
- Geocaching.

Specific Hunting Regulations

During the Archery season hunters will be allowed state bag limit harvest two deer (one antlered and one antlerless) per day.

All hunters must check-in and check-out after each hunt using a self-clearing permit available from a check station. Reporting your hunting activity and any wildlife harvest information will help us better manage the Refuge. Hunter participation and wildlife harvest data are vital to the management of Refuge. Do not fill out a self-clearing permit for scouting!

No individual may enter the Refuge earlier than 4 am and must exit no later than two hours after legal sunset for that day. Waterfowl hunting must cease by 12 noon and all decoys and blinds removed from the hunting area by 1 pm. Turkey hunting must also cease by 12 noon.

The International Bowhunters Certification Course is not required for archery hunting.

Only portable and ground deer stands may be used. Deer stands may be placed on the refuge in a non-hunting position one day prior to the archery season and must be removed from the Refuge within one day after the archery season closes. No exceptions! Hunters may place only one deer stand on the Refuge. Deer stands must have the owners name, address and phone number clearly printed on the stand. Portable and ground stands must be placed in a non-hunting position, at or near the base of the tree, when not in use.

Waterfowl, small game and archery hunting is prohibited during quota primitive firearms deer hunts. Archery hunting is prohibited in Units 1B & 2B during youth deer hunts. Hunt Area 1B is open to archery only and Hunt Area 2B is open to archery, squirrel, and rabbit hunting. NOTE: Both Hunt Area 1B and 2B will be closed to all public use after November 30, 2025. All deer stands must be removed from Hunt Area 1B and 2B on November 30, 2025.

State bag limits apply unless otherwise specified. The only seasons open are those listed in this brochure.

Hunting is permitted only in designated areas during dates shown on map.

Youths are generally defined as those individuals 17 years of age or younger. Youths under the age of 16 may hunt without hunter education certification if they are accompanied by and under direct supervision of a person born before September 1, 1969 that has a valid hunting license; or they are accompanied by and under the direct supervision of a person who is 18 years of age or older and has proof of successful completion of a hunter education course approved by Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

One adult may supervise two youths during small game and migratory bird hunts but may supervise only one youth during big game hunts. All youth must be accompanied and supervised by an adult while hunting. Direct supervision means that the person being supervised is within a normal audible voice contact and in direct line of sight of the supervising person at all times while hunting. The supervising adult is responsible for ensuring that youth hunters do not engage in conduct that would constitute a violation of refuge regulations. During the Deer Primitive Firearm Lottery hunts youth are not permitted to use modern firearms.

All hunters must wear and display 400 square inches of “hunters orange” and a “hunters solid orange” cap during the deer gun seasons. Hunters participating in the special dog season for rabbits are required to wear a “hunter’s solid orange” cap.

Deer hunters hunting from concealed ground blinds must display a minimum of 400 square inches of “hunters orange or hunters pink” above or around their blinds which is visible from 360 degrees.

All refuge users must enter and exit the refuge only at designated parking lots. Accessing adjacent lands from any part of the refuge or from refuge parking areas is prohibited.

Beaver, raccoon, feral hogs, nutria and coyote may be taken incidental to refuge hunts with weapons legal for that hunt until the daily bag limit of game is taken. Use of dogs to hunt, trail or take deer or hogs is prohibited.

Attention: Spring squirrel season is closed on Lake Ophelia NWR.

Hunting with pointer/retriever dogs during migratory bird seasons and hunting with rabbit or squirrel dogs during the rabbit season is permitted. However, rabbit and squirrel dogs are allowed only after the statewide Louisiana modern firearms deer season has closed until the close of the state rabbit season. Use of dogs to hunt, trail or take deer or hogs is prohibited.

No more than two dogs per hunting party for squirrel hunting. All dogs must be collared with owner’s name and phone number. Rabbit hunters must wear a minimum of a solid orange cap during special dog season.

Sport Fishing Regulations

Sport fishing is permitted only in Duck, Westcut Lakes, Possum Bayou, Lake Long and in the immediate vicinity of the Lake Agnes drainage culverts on the Red River. Lake Long and Possum Bayou (South of boat ramp) are open to boat access by use of electric or non-motorized boats only. Duck, West Cut Lakes, Nicholas and Possum Bayou (North of boat ramp) are open to boat access with motors up to 35 horsepower.

Use of gear or equipment other than hook and line to catch fish or bait fish is prohibited.

Fishing is permitted from March 1 through October 15 during daylight hours only.

Possession of cleaned or processed fish on the refuge is prohibited.

Creel limits, boating safety, and license requirements are in accordance with state regulations unless otherwise specified in this brochure.

CAUTION HUNTERS, BLACK BEAR ADVISORY!

In a cooperative effort between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Louisiana State University, and the Black Bear Conservation Committee, Louisiana black bear have been successfully reestablished on Lake Ophelia NWR. These bears remain protected and the taking of them is strictly prohibited by State law.Hunters must positively identify their target before pulling the trigger or releasing an arrow! Black bears and feral hogs are sometimes hard to distinguish in heavy cover.

Signs and Boundaries

Signs are useful tools in regulating the use of a public area. The wording of the sign applies to the area behind the sign. Please respect the following signs.



This sign delineates the refuge boundary. Always know the regulations before entering.



All hunting and possession of any weapon is prohibited beyond this sign.



This area is closed to all public entry.



Speed limit on refuge roads, unless otherwise posted.



No vehicles are allowed on these trails.

Lake Ophelia 2025 - 2026 Hunting Seasons		
Type	Season Dates	Specific Regulations
Squirrel and Rabbit	State Season	Closed during primitive firearm deer hunts.
	Spring Squirrel Season Closed	Squirrel and rabbit dogs permitted from end of the statewide modern firearms deer season until end of the state rabbit season. During the special dog rabbit season hunters must wear a minimum of solid hunter orange cap. Use of dogs to hunt, trail or take deer or hogs is prohibited. Rabbit dogs allowed after closure of the Area 6 State Modern firearms season-Dogs allowed January 19, 2026. Use of SHOTGUN ONLY during the dog season. Non-toxic shot required.
Deer-Archery	November 1, 2025 - February 15, 2026	State Bag Limit Apply All areas CLOSED during primitive firearm hunts. Area 1B & 2B is closed during youth gun hunts and is closed to all public use after November 30, 2025.
Deer- Primitive Firearm (Lottery)	January 3-4, 2026 January 17-18, 2026	Special Quota Permit Required. Two deer (one antlered and one antlerless) per hunt , hunter orange (solid orange hat and vest) required, hunters must check in and out “Daily” at a manned check station.
Deer-Youth Hunt (Lottery)	December 6, 2024 January 24, 2026	Rifles allowed. One parent and one staff/volunteer with each youth. Two deer (one antlered and one antlerless), per hunt. Hunter orange required.
Waterfowl	Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday until noon during State Season	Closed during primitive firearm hunts. Boats,blinds and decoys must be removed daily by 1 pm. Non-toxic shot required. Dogs only permitted to retrieve game.
Youth Waterfowl Weekend	Saturday only of State Zone Date	All refuge waterfowl hunting regulations apply.
Woodcock	State Woodcock Season	Closed during primitive firearm deer hunts. Non-toxic shot required.
Turkey	First 16 days of State Season until noon	Harvested turkeys must be checked out at Self Clearing Check station. Incidental hunting of hogs and use of turkey gobbler decoys is prohibited during Turkey season.

