

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Bombay Hook

National Wildlife Refuge Upland Game and Webless Migratory Bird Hunting Regulations 2025–2026



Welcome

Bombay Hook was established in 1937 as a link in the chain of refuges extending from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. It is primarily a refuge and breeding ground for migrating birds and other wildlife. The value and importance of Bombay Hook for migratory bird protection and conservation has increased through the years, primarily due to the management of the refuge and the loss of high quality habitat along the Atlantic Flyway.

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/eeo/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.)

We prohibit the use of rimfire or centerfire rifles and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols.

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 to access the refuge for hunting. All State regulations and laws are applicable.

Boats

Watercraft may not be hunted from or used to access upland game and webless migratory bird hunting locations.

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.

Permits

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

Read and sign this brochure, it serves as your permit.

Open to Hunting

Hunting of cottontail rabbit, gray squirrel, pheasant, mourning dove, snipe, rails (Clapper, King, Sora, and Virginia), gallinules, moorhens, and woodcock is permitted on designated areas of the refuge within federal and state guidelines subject to the following conditions:

The State of Delaware has closed all hunting of wild quail. Quail hunting is not permitted on the refuge at this time.

The use of dogs is permitted to locate, point, and retrieve while hunting upland game and webless migratory birds.

Coyote and red fox hunting is only allowed while concurrently hunting deer in areas and seasons open to deer hunting. Hunting fox by chase is prohibited.

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.

Scouting

Scouting will be allowed the Saturday and Sunday before a season opening and on Sundays during daylight hours from September 1 - February 22.

Bombay Hook NWR Hunting Permit 2025—2026

When signed and carried, this serves as your permit for all refuge upland game and webless migratory bird hunts and acknowledges your understanding of the regulations contained herein. Expires August 31, 2026

Signature (permits are not transferable)

Method of take: Shotguns shooting shot is the only legal method of take for upland game and webless migratory birds on Bombay Hook.

Exception: Fox and coyote may be taken incidentally while deer hunting with the weapon and ammunition being used to hunt deer.

Access Areas

Fischer Tract, Steamboat Landing, and South Upland units are the only areas open to upland game and webless migratory bird hunting.

Exception: Webless migratory birds may be taken in the South Waterfowl units while waterfowl hunting during an open season.

Days – Monday – Saturday. **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. On West Waterfowl hunt days small game opens at 12:00pm. **Nov 26, 28, 29 Dec 26-31 Jan 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13**

Seasonal Closures – Upland game and webless migratory bird hunts are closed during the firearms deer hunts occurring: **October 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 18 November 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22 December 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, and January 17, 23, 24, 29, 30, 31**

Guided Hunts

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

Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge 2591 Whitehall Neck Rd Smyrna, DE 19977

**302-653-9345
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1-800-344-WILD
July 2025**



Activity	Season Dates	Harvest	Hunt Areas
Rabbit	November 24 – February 28	State limits apply	Fischer Tract, Steamboat Landing, South Upland
Gray Squirrel	September 15 – February 7	State limits apply	Fischer Tract, Steamboat Landing, South Upland
Quail	Closed	Closed	Closed
Ring-necked Pheasant	November 24 – February 28	State limits apply	Fischer Tract, Steamboat Landing, South Upland
Mourning Dove	September 1 - 27 November 24 - 29 December 8 – January 31	State limits apply	Fischer Tract, Steamboat Landing, South Upland
Snipe	September 23 – November 29 December 25 - January 31	State limits apply	Fischer Tract, Steamboat Landing, South Upland
Woodcock	November 24 - November 29 December 25 – January	State limits apply	Fischer Tract, Steamboat Landing, South Upland
Rails	September 1 -November 8	State limits apply	Steamboat Landing South Upland
Gallinules	September 1 - November 8	State limits apply	Steamboat Landing South Upland
Coyote Red Fox	November 1 - January 31	State limits apply	Any area open to deer hunting. Coyote and Red Fox may only be taken incidentally during firearms deer hunts.

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.

Prohibited Activities

By law, recreational activities on national wildlife refuges are prohibited unless expressly permitted. Please check with the office if you have questions.

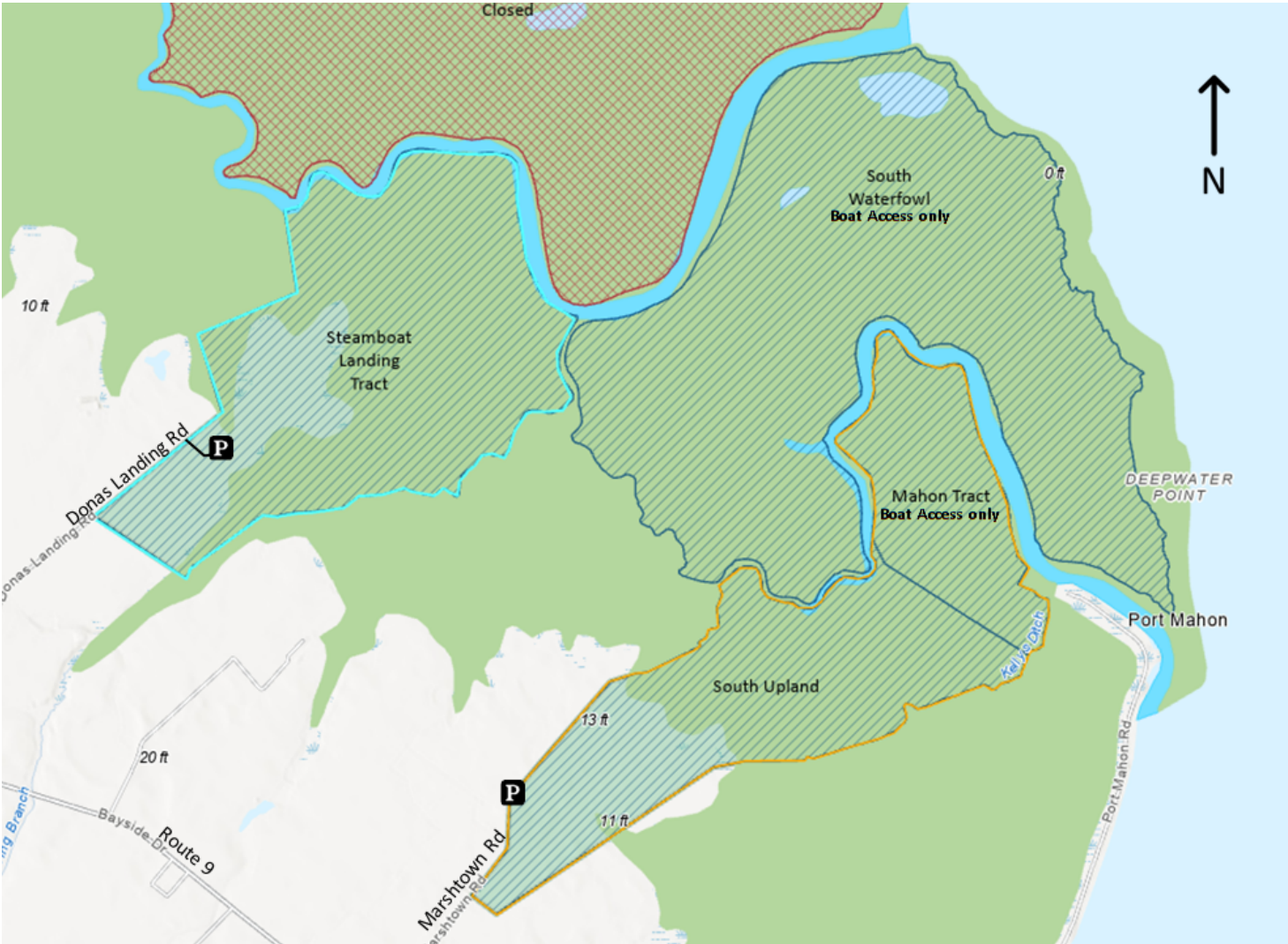
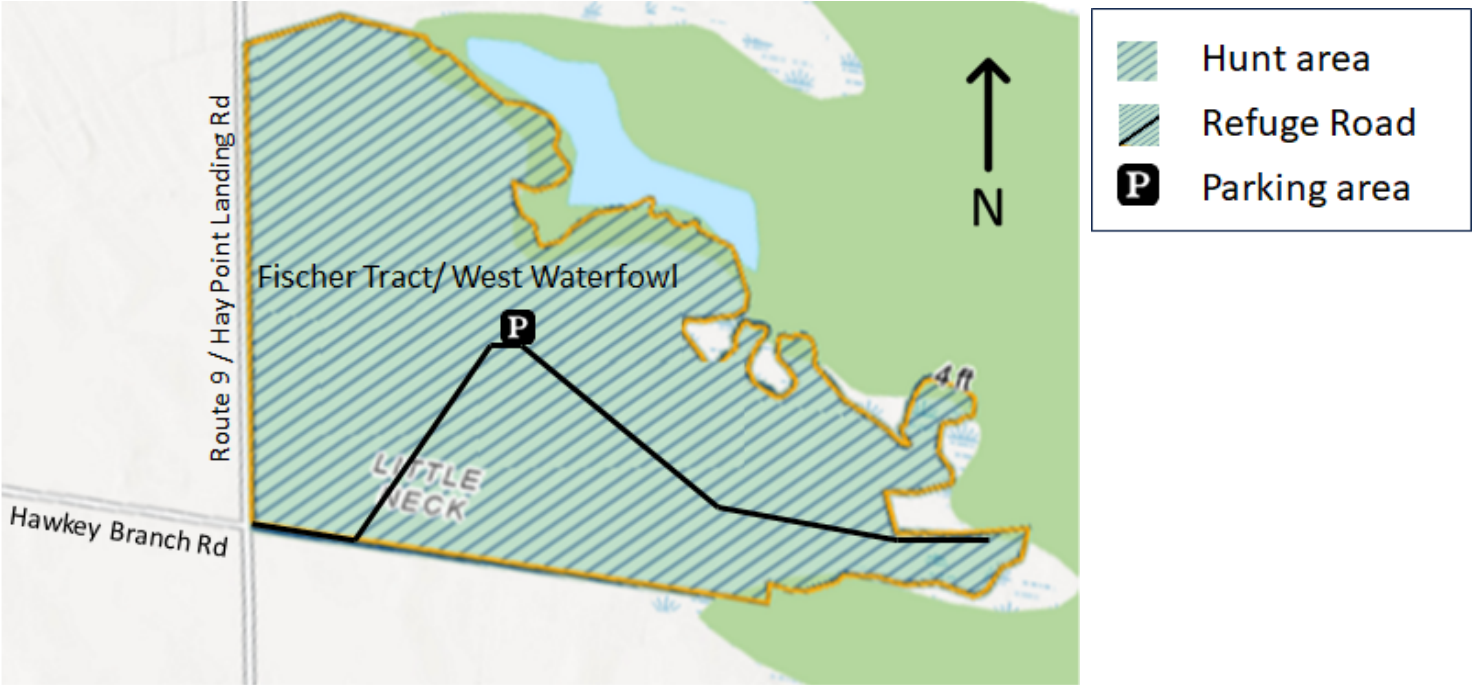
- Entering hunt areas without possessing authorized hunt permits.
- Hunting and scouting outside designated days.
- The use of rimfire or centerfire rifles and all handguns including muzzleloading pistols.
- The use or possession of buckshot while hunting.
- Use and/or possession of alcoholic beverages 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/game monitoring devices.
- Use of drones.

Potential Disturbance

Due to an ongoing research project biologists may be present in the Steamboat Landing unit.

Work will be confined to the marsh areas in the Southern part of the unit. Researchers will be wearing orange vests and will wait until after 9am to enter the area on hunt days to minimize disturbance.

Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge Hunt Unit Map



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