



This is a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a network of lands and waters managed for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 2683
Titusville, FL 32781

321/861 0669 Visitor Center
Signature Card Contact #: 321/861 0669

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/merritt-island>

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

<https://www.fws.gov>

September 2026

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Merritt Island

National Wildlife Refuge

Waterfowl Hunting Regulations 2026-2027

Welcome to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (NWR/Refuge) was established in 1963 as an overlay of the John F. Kennedy Space Center (KSC). Some areas of the Refuge can be closed by NASA for safety or security purposes. Individuals found inside NASA's "normal" or "expanded" restricted areas are subject to arrest. Merritt Island NWR and KSC maintain the right to close any portion of the refuge for any length of time. In that case, we will not refund or reissue any permits.

The tremendous variety of habitats found on the Refuge and its location on the Atlantic Flyway makes the Refuge an important wintering area for migratory birds. Hunting ducks, mergansers, and coots is allowed in designated areas of the Refuge.

Waterfowl hunting is permitted on 36,000 acres of the Refuge. The remainder of the Refuge is closed to hunting to protect non-game birds and endangered species and to permit other recreational activities. The waters of the Banana River are closed to hunting at all times. Concentration of waterfowl occur in the open brackish waters of Mosquito Lagoon and impoundments which are managed for freshwater. See map on back for details. There are color maps on our website at: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/merritt-island>.

Waterfowl-Specific Hunting Regulations

Waterfowl hunting on the Refuge is in accordance with State and Federal Migratory Bird Regulations. Hunters should consult these regulations before going afield. Listed below are Refuge-specific regulations that pertain to Merritt Island NWR for waterfowl hunting. These regulations may be modified annually or as habitat, populations, or other conditions change. Violation of regulations may result in the loss of hunting privileges.

License and Permits

- Hunters must carry a valid State-issued Merritt Island NWR "Waterfowl Quota Permit", which can be purchased through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) while hunting in areas 1 or 4 from the beginning of the regular waterfowl season through end of the regular waterfowl season. The Quota Hunt Permit is a limited entry/quota permit, area-specific, and nontransferable.
- All hunters must possess and carry a current signed Waterfowl Hunt Brochure (Refuge Permit).
- Three total guests are allowed per quota permit and each guest must remain within 30 yards of the quota permitted hunter.
- We prohibit access, launching a boat, or leaving a vehicle parked for hunting purposes on Black Point Wildlife Drive, Playalinda Beach Road (Beach Road), or Scrub Ridge Trail. No parking in front of gates, barricades or boat ramps.
- We require an adult, age 18 or older, to supervise hunters age 15 and younger.
- Hunters must have on their person all applicable Florida hunting licenses and permits and must comply with State requirements for hunter education courses.
- Persons possessing, transporting or carrying firearms on National Wildlife Refuges must comply with all provisions of Federal, State and local law. Persons may only discharge firearms in accordance with Federal regulations.

Equipment

- Each hunter may possess a maximum of 25 shells during one hunt day which includes both vehicles and boats.
- Only steel shot or other approved non-toxic shot is allowed. Possession of lead or other toxic shot is prohibited.
- We prohibit construction of permanent blinds or digging into dikes. No equipment may be left on the Refuge overnight.
- Drones and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are NOT allowed on the Refuge.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Waterfowl Hunt Permit 2026-2027

Name: _____

Print

Address: _____

(I have read and understand all Refuge
hunting regulations.)

Signature (This permit is only valid when
signed.)

In case of emergency call 321/867 7911
Federal Wildlife Officer 407-275-4150_7

1

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2



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Scouting

- Boats must remain within the perimeter impoundment ditch and may not be in the interior while scouting.
- Hunters must carry their valid Quota Hunt Permit identifying the permitted hunt area and dates while scouting areas 1 and 4.
- Hunters must be in possession of all required State and Federal licenses, stamps and permits while scouting.
- Hunters may not possess hunting weapons while scouting.

Harvest

- Dogs must remain under owner's control at all times.
- Hunters must report all hunting activities at one of the two check stations (when present), including both successful and non-successful hunts, prior to leaving the Refuge and no later than 1 p.m.
- Legal shooting hours are ½ hour before legal sunrise until 12 noon. All waterfowl hunters must remove all equipment and must be off the Refuge by 1 p.m. daily.
- Hunters may enter the Refuge no earlier than 4 am for the purpose of waterfowl hunting.
- We prohibit hunting or shooting within 25 feet or shooting from any portion of a dike, dirt road or railroad grade. In addition, we prohibit shooting over any dike or roadway. We prohibit hunting or shooting within 150 yards of all paved roads.
- The use of internal combustion engines is restricted to the perimeter impoundment ditch at all time, to reduce habitat degradation and damage to the marsh. Vessels may be propelled outside the impoundment perimeter ditches by push-poles, paddles, or electric motors only. Internal combustion engines must be shut off while inside impoundments past the perimeter ditch.
- The Indian River within the Refuge boundary adjacent to hunt areas 1 and 4 is closed to all hunting during the quota season. Access to all impoundments in areas 1 and 4 is prohibited from the Indian River.

- Crossing impoundment levees in boats under power is prohibited in the Mosquito Lagoon.
- Two pole and troll zones are delineated with buoys in Mosquito Lagoon (see map). Use of internal combustion engines is prohibited within zones. Outside the designated posted channels, vessels must be propelled by push-poles, paddles, or electric motors only.

Season: 2026-2027

We allow hunting on Wednesdays, Saturdays, Sundays, and Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day; provided they fall within the State's waterfowl season. The following are the proposed 2026-2027 Florida Migratory Bird Hunting Season Dates (pending rule adoption by the state and publishing of final frameworks by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

Wood Duck and Teal: September 19-23, 2026

First Phase: November 21 - 29, 2026

Second Phase: December 12, 2026 - January 31, 2027

Youth Hunt: November 14, 2026 and February 8, 2027

Veteran's and Military Hunt: February 6-7, 2027

Limited Entry/Quota Permits - Administered by FWC

To hunt waterfowl in areas 1 and 4 during the months of November, December, or January, you will need to purchase a Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Waterfowl Limited/Quota Permit through the FWC Recreational Licensing Issuance Services System.

- Each permit costs \$27.50 and is non-transferable
- You must be 16 years of age to apply
- Each hunter may purchase up to three permits per person
- Each permit allows up to three guests
- Preference points do not apply
- Each permit is area specific and for specific dates
- All hunters must carry a picture ID, a Florida Hunting License, a self-issuing Refuge

Permit (signed brochure), and all appropriate State license

- A Florida Wildlife Management Permit is not required

How to Apply

To apply for a Merritt Island NWR permit online go to <https://myfwc.com/license/limited-entry/>, then choose "Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge" or complete the application worksheet and present it to a licensed agent or tax collector office.

Florida residents applying through the internet must have a valid Florida driver's license or ID card to be considered a resident. Active duty military, resident disabled customers, and residents age 65 or older that do not have an active Florida Driver's license or ID card must apply at "at a licensed agent or tax collector office to show alternate proof.

When to Apply: 2026-2026

Phase I Applications: July 31 - August 10, 2026

Phase I Claim Deadline: August 24, 2026

Phase II Applications: August 28 - September 7, 2026

Permit Claim Deadline: September 21, 2026

Phase III Applications: September 25 - October 5, 2026

Permit Claim Deadline: Until filled or the final hunt date

What You Need to Know

- Permits are issued by random drawing in three phases
- To check for availability go to <https://license.gooutdoorsflorida.com/license/PublicQuotaInventory>. Drawing results are typically posted on the website within two weeks after the end of the application period.
- If you are successful in one or more of the phased drawings you may claim your permit online and print from your own printer or claim your permit at a licensed agent or tax collector office.
- If lost or stolen you may reprint your permit at no cost from the online website or for \$2.50 from a licensed vendor, or you may download the "FWC Fish/Hunt Florida App" and sync your license to your smartphone.
- If you have problems with issuance of your quota permit, please contact FWC at 850/488 3641 (M-F 8 am - 5 p.m.)



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