



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

Big Game 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 hunt area lies within Volusia and Brevard Counties in Florida. Hunting white-tailed deer and feral hog is allowed in designated zones on the Refuge. Each hunt is permitted as a three-day hunt for 30 permitted hunters.

The hunt area includes 5,000 acres of upland habitat along State Route 3, north of Haulover Canal between the Indian River Lagoon and Mosquito Lagoon. The remainder of the Refuge is closed to protect endangered species and to permit other recreational activities. There are five hunt zones named: (1) Shiloh (2) Gomez Grant Line (3) WSEG (4) Pine Flatwoods and (5) Beacon 42.

The hunt zones provide a variety of habitats suited for white-tailed deer and feral hogs. Pine Flatwoods hiking trail will be closed to all public use on big game hunt days except for permitted hunters. See map on back for details. There are color maps on our website at: <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/merritt-island>.

Big Game Hunting-Specific Regulations

Big game hunting on the Refuge is allowed in accordance with State and Federal Regulations. Hunters should consult these regulations before going afield. Listed below are Refuge-specific regulations that pertain to Merritt Island NWR for Big Game 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 'Big Game Quota Hunt Permit, which can be purchased through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The Quota Hunt Permit is a limited entry/quota permit, zone-specific, and nontransferable.
- All hunters must possess and carry a current signed Big Game Hunt Brochure (Refuge Permit).
- Permitted hunters may take one adult guest hunter and/or one youth guest hunter. An adult guest hunter may take one additional youth guest hunter. The party must remain within 30 yards of the quota permitted hunter.**
- Hunters must have on their persons all applicable Florida hunting licenses and permits and must comply with State requirements for hunter-education courses.
- Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on a National Wildlife Refuge must comply with all provisions of Federal, State and local law. Persons may only discharge firearms in accordance with Refuge regulations.

Equipment

- Crossbows are not allowed unless you obtain a "Persons with Disabilities Crossbow Permit" from FWC.
- Archery hunters must wear at least 500 square inches of solid fluorescent-orange color while moving to and from their vehicles, to their stands or hunting spots, and while tracking or dragging out game.
- No field or game cameras are allowed to be left on the Refuge overnight.
- Drones and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are NOT allowed on the Refuge.

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Big Game 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

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Scouting

- We prohibit all scouting and stalking in the hunt area during the quota hunt. Hunters must be on their stand or in the blind while hunting.
- We allow permitted hunters to scout within their permitted zones up to seven days prior to their permitted hunts.
- Hunters must carry their Valid Quota Hunt Permit identifying the permitted hunt zone and dates while scouting. Hunters must be in possession of all required State and Federal licenses and permits while scouting.
- Hunters may not possess hunting weapons while scouting.

Harvest

- Merritt Island NWR falls under the state DMU zone C-4. Big game hunting on Merritt Island NWR is not the same as archery hunting on private lands. These hunt opportunities are an ability to hunt with archery equipment during archery, general gun, or muzzleloading seasons. Harvest take will follow State requirements for each time period. Hunters may use archery equipment to harvest deer according with the DMU zone C-4 regulations for the day of their hunt. Hunts may follow archery, general gun, or muzzleloader harvest requirements.
- **The hunt party must share State bag limit.**
- There is no bag limit or size limit for the take of feral hogs.
- Legal shooting hours are ½ hour before legal sunrise to ½ hour before legal sunset.
- We prohibit hunting from Refuge roads or within 150 yards of roads open to public vehicle traffic, or any KSC facility.
- Permitted Big Game hunters may access the Refuge no earlier than 4:00 am and must leave the Refuge no later than 2 hours after legal sunset.
- Access from SR 402/406 may be limited on rocket launch days.
- Access to hunt units from Mosquito and Indian River Lagoons by boat is not permitted.
- To track wounded game beyond one hour after legal sunset, hunters must gain consent from a Federal Wildlife Officer.
- If flagging or other trail-marking material is used, you must print your name on

each piece or marker. Flagging and trail markers may be set up to seven days prior to the permitted hunt. All flagging and markers must be removed by the end of the hunt.

- Each hunter is authorized only one stand or blind per hunter. Each stand or blind must clearly be marked with their Florida State customer ID number and date installed. Additional guests must have both the permitted hunter and guest hunter Florida State customer ID number. The word *guest* or *youth* must be included on additional stands.
- Stalking or moving through the hunt area while hunting is prohibited.
- Hunters may field dress game; however, we prohibit cleaning game within 333 yards of any public area, road, game-check station or gate. Dumping game carcasses on the Refuge is prohibited.
- We prohibit hunting with dogs; however, we are allowing the limited use of trained tracking dogs but only with prior authorization by a Federal Wildlife Officer.
- Hunters must report all hunting activities at one of the two check stations indicated on the map, at the end of each day's hunt.

Season: 2026 - 2027

Limited Entry/ Quota Permit Required

Archery I October 9-11

Archery II November 13-15

Archery III November 27 - 29

Limited Entry/Quota Permits - Regulated by FWC

To hunt white tailed deer or feral hogs, you will need to purchase a Merritt Island NWR Archery Limited/Quota Permit through the FWC's Recreational Licensing Issuance Services System.

- Each permit costs \$27.50 and the permit is non-transferrable.
- You must be 16 years of age to apply.
- Preference points do apply.
- Each permit is zone 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. Youth, 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 a licensed agent or tax collector office to show alternate proof.

When to Apply: 2026-2027

Phase I Application: May 15-June 15, 2026

Phase I Claim Deadline: July 20, 2026

Phase II Leftovers: July 23, 2026 until filled or the final hunt date

What You Need to Know

- Phase I permits are issued by random drawing
- Remaining permits will be issued on a first come, first served basis
- 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 the Phase I drawing 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 pm)

Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge Big Game Hunt Zones

