



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge
1324 Sandpiper Road
Virginia Beach, VA 23456



Application for Competitive Running Events, Bicycling Events and Birding Cups at Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Applications for competitive running and bicycle events through Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), and birding cups will be accepted through August 1, 2026 for priority consideration for the 2026 – 2027 season. Please be sure to read through the entire application to ensure your request complies with the requirements of these events.

Date of Application _____

Name of Applicant _____

Name of Company (if applicable) _____

Type of Competitive Event *(please see page 3 for location options for each type of event):*

- ☐ Running
- ☐ Bicycling
- ☐ Birding Cup

Proposed Event Date(s) _____

Is there any flexibility with the date(s) listed? _____

What is the proposed route of the event? _____

Number of Participants *(please see page 3 for participant limits)* _____

Participant Cost *(How much will participants pay to participate?)* _____

Please explain the purpose of the event. In particular, is the purpose of this event public outreach, environmental education, interpretation, or conservation? Do you have an existing plan to incorporate the wildlife refuge mission and that of the National Wildlife Refuge System into the event?

Does the event have insurance or are you able to obtain insurance prior to the event? _____

Have you received a permit from Back Bay NWR for a competitive running events, bicycling events or birding cup within the last 3 years? To ensure a fair opportunity for all interested users, requests will first be granted to those who have not received a permit in the last three years. If no new requests are received, requests by recently permitted applicants will be accepted. _____

If accepted, the applicant will be required to submit a Special Use Permit application that includes the information listed above, in addition to other details. The event is not permitted until a Special Use Permit is signed by both the applicant and refuge staff, and the required permit fee has been paid.

Page 3 includes requirements for competitive running events, bicycling events and birding cups on Back Bay NWR. Although this page includes many of the requirements, the Compatibility Determination fully describing the activity can be found at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/back-bay> or by emailing backbaynwr@fws.gov.

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

Competitive Running Races, Bicycling Races and Birding Cups

The following requirements ensure these activities can be hosted on the wildlife refuge without incurring negative impacts to other users, wildlife, and natural resources.

Where would the use be conducted?

Competitive sporting events would be allowed in limited areas of the refuge open to the public. This includes the entrance road, parking lots, beach (excluding the North Mile), trails, and canoe/kayak launch facilities as an access point. Competitive sporting events would not be conducted at Black Gut. Activities would not be permitted in areas and times the refuge is closed to public. Competitive running and bicycling races must enter onto the refuge at the beach ramp near the Fee Booth, travel on the entrance road (avoiding the closed North Mile on the beach) and re-enter the beach via the Seaside Trail near the Visitor Center. Races would not be permitted on the East and West Dikes.

When would the use be conducted?

All competitive sporting events must be conducted during times the refuge is open to the public. Further, competitive running and bicycling events would only be permitted from November 1 through March 31, and would not be considered during other times of year due to impacts to other users and natural resources. Birding cups would be considered year-round, although not permitted on the East or West Dikes during the refuge's seasonal closure of these areas from November 1 through March 31. Other locations on the refuge would be considered year-round for birding cups. No events will be permitted during times the refuge is closed, including from 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sunrise. Competitive running and bicycle racing events would not be permitted during periods of critical migration of shorebirds and sea turtles. Any refuge facilities and grounds may temporarily close to the public for a refuge management activity, safety, special event or other programs, causing the cancellation of a planned competitive sporting event.

How would the use be conducted?

Only competitive events that support public outreach, environmental education, interpretation, conservation, refuge purposes and the Refuge System mission will be permitted. Requests that do not directly support these will be considered on a case by-case basis to see if a secondary component can be considered to ensure compatibility and appropriateness. The seasonal entrance fee from April 1 through October 31 will be charged to all participants (if applicable). The Special Use Permit does not give the permittee or its designees exclusive use or access to any site or facility. Requests for events must be received at least 60 days in advance of the desired date. Each request must be presented in writing with details of who, what, where, when, why and how the activity will be conducted. The provider would notify the refuge of the fees charged per participant. Any collection of money for fundraising aspects of events and the giving of prizes to winners will be conducted off Federal property. The refuge would permit up to four birding cups per year with a maximum of 35 participants per event. The refuge would permit up to two competitive running races and up to two competitive bicycling races through the refuge per year with a maximum of 50 participants per event. Depending on the details of an event, a CPR/First Aid-certified individual provided by the event host may be requested to support the activity. Vehicles are not permitted to follow runners and bicyclists. Competitive running and bicycle races must start and stop off refuge lands, entering onto the refuge at the Fee Booth, traveling on the entrance road (avoiding the closed North Mile on the beach), and reentering the beach via the Seaside Trail near the Visitor Center. Bicycles must be walked on the Seaside Trail for the safety of other visitors.