

Crab Orchard

National Wildlife Refuge Special Hunt Area Hunting Regulations 2026–2027



Welcome

Hunters who receive a Special Hunt Area permit must read and understand this brochure before entering the field. This guide provides essential information on munitions and explosives of concern (MEC), hunting regulations, permitted access, and safety expectations within the Special Hunt Areas.

Each person hunting within the Special Hunt Areas must sign and carry this brochure during all scouting and hunting activities. Hunters may only access the Special Hunt Areas for the duration of their permit. Failure to follow these rules or any state laws may result in citation and removal from the area. If you have questions, please contact the Refuge Visitor Center before entering the field.

Safety

Munitions and Explosives of Concern (MEC) refer to military ordnance manufactures within the refuge boundary that may have been lost during transportation, such as falling from vehicles, or stored improperly. Several types of munitions were manufactured here during WWII, including the production of M1A1 landmine and fuzes for M48 series projectiles.

The public must consider any suspect metal object encountered as MEC and extremely dangerous. Many people assume a MEC found on the refuge is a “dud”, but a MEC is never safe. All MEC must be treated as live and must never be handled.

Munitions and Explosives of Concern (MEC)

MEC may resemble a pipe, soda can, ball, or bullet-shaped object. They can vary greatly in size, appearing either small or large in both length and diameter. MEC may look old and rusty or appear new, and they may be intact, broken, or present only as components such as fuzes. Soil erosion from rain, fire, or vegetation removal can expose previously buried MEC. These items may be found on the ground or in the water and may occur as a single object or in clusters throughout an area.

If You Think It's MEC – Use the 3 R's

- 1. Recognize:** MEC can appear in many shapes and sizes and may be hidden or exposed. If you see metal on or in the ground, assume it is MEC.
- 2. Retreat:** Do not touch or move the object. Back away along the same path and mark only the general area if needed.
- 3. Report:** Once safely away, report the sighting to the Refuge CERCLA Team (618-694-6511) or Visitor Center (618-997-3344). Provide the location of where the MEC was found, what it looks like, the approximate size, shape and color of it.

Due to the industrial operations, unknown MEC may be found in areas not shown on the map. Always hunt with caution when inside the Special Hunt Areas.

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.)

Recreation Use Fees

Entrance and user fees apply to all vehicles and vessels. Passes are available at [frecreation.gov/gateway/1358](https://www.fws.gov/gateway/1358).

Crab Orchard Special Hunt Area Permit 2026—2027

Your signature indicates you have read and understand the refuge hunting regulations for the Special Hunt Area. Each hunter is required to sign and carry this brochure with them any time they are within the Special Hunt Area.
Expires August 31, 2027

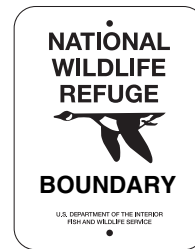
Signature (permits are not transferable) Date

Signs and Boundaries

- Munitions and Explosives of Concern (MEC) have been identified beyond this sign. The area is closed to all public access. See other side for more information about MEC.
- IF YOU DID NOT DROP IT, DO NOT PICK IT UP!



- Refuge Boundary Sign
Unauthorized entry prohibited: These signs mark the boundary of the refuge. They DO NOT prohibit access, only unauthorized uses.
- Restricted Use Area Sign: These signs mark the boundary of the restricted area of the refuge. Areas behind this sign are only open to hunters with a Special Hunt Area permit.
- Area Closed Sign: These signs mark areas that are closed to all members of the public.



Prohibited Activities

By law, recreational activities on national wildlife refuges are prohibited unless expressly permitted:

- Hunting within 50 yards of public facilities is prohibited
- Possession and use of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances while hunting is prohibited.
- Searching for or removal of any natural items such as plants, historic, and archaeological features is prohibited.
- Marking or flagging any tree or other Refuge feature with reflectors, paint, or other substance are prohibited.
- Target practice and/or any non-hunting discharge of a weapon is prohibited.
- Organized deer drives is prohibited. We define a "deer drive" as an organized or planned effort to pursue, drive, chase, or otherwise frighten or cause deer to move in the direction of any person(s) who is part of the organized or planned hunt and known to be waiting for the deer.

Report Hunting Violations

- 1-844-FWS-TIPS (1-844-397-8477)
- Turn In a Poacher (TIP) Line: 1-877-236-7529

6987 Headquarters Rd
Marion, IL 62959

Hearing impaired person may contact Crab Orchard
through the Federal Relay Number at 1 800-877-8339.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1-800-344-WILD (9453)

August 2026

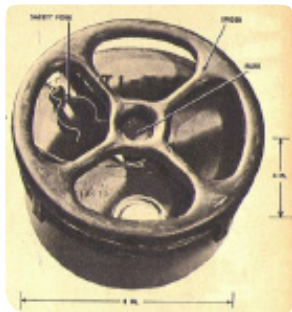


Diagram of a new 1940's
M1A1 landmine.



M1A1 mine chassis found
decades later on the
Refuge



Fuze cases found dec-
ades later on the Refuge.



Diagram of a new 1940's
M1A1 fuze with safety fork,
firing pin, spring, primer,
detonator, high explosives
booster.



Left: M1A1 fuze found
on the Refuge. These are
dangerous, because they
may contain chemicals
that easily explode.

Motorized Vehicles

All licensed motor vehicles are restricted to roads and parking areas shown on the map. Parking along the roadway is permitted in accordance with state regulations as long as gates and roads are left unblocked. ATVs and UTVs are prohibited.

Bicycling

Bicycles and Class 1,2 and 3 e-bikes with an electric motor of 750 watts (1 horsepower) or less are allowed on designated motorized roads and bicycle trails. Operators of e-bikes must follow state age requirements.

Boats

Some areas are accessible by boat. Waters east of Wolf Creek Road are closed Oct 16 – Apr 30.

Dogs

The use of dogs for hunting is allowed on the refuge in accordance with state regulations, provided the dogs are always under the immediate control of the hunter.

Personal Property

All personal equipment must be removed daily. Trail cameras are prohibited. Tree stands must be labeled with the owner's name or IDNR customer identification number and be temporary. Permanent tree stands, nails, screw-in steps, or other items that penetrate the outer bark of a tree is prohibited.

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.

Accessibility

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 Civil Rights, <https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eo/public-civil-rights>.

Hunting Opportunities

Deer – Archery

Hunters must possess a valid IDNR Archery Deer Permit. Archery hunting in the Special Hunt Areas follows state archery seasons but includes temporary closures during firearm seasons. Hunters are required to check in prior to hunting or scouting.

Deer – Firearm (CRAB1, CRAB2, CRABY1, CRABD1)

Hunters may apply for firearm permit draws through IDNR at huntillinois.org. Selected hunters will receive their permit from IDNR and a check-in information email from CrabOrchard@fws.gov.

Deer – Muzzleloader

Hunters may apply for muzzleloader permits through the IDNR lottery system at huntillinois.org.

Turkey – Spring Youth & Spring Firearm

Applications may be submitted through IDNR at huntillinois.org. Selected hunters will receive their permit from IDNR and a check-in information email from the refuge. There is no fall turkey season in the Special Hunt Areas.

Waterfowl – Youth

Contact the refuge for current information on youth waterfowl opportunities.

Waterfowl – Teal, Duck, Geese

A Federal Waterfowl Stamp and all required state licenses are required. Hunting occurs in the Hampton Unit only, Wednesday through Sunday, beginning the Wednesday after the second split season.

Motorized boats are prohibited in the Hampton Hunt Unit.

Other Opportunities

The refuge may offer partner-led mentored hunting opportunities. Contact refuge staff for details.

Open Area Hunting

Hunters who wish to hunt the Open Area must review and sign the Open Area Hunt Brochure. Contact the Refuge Visitor Center at 618-997-3344 ext. 1 for hunting-related questions.

Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge



Hunter Parking



Visitor Information Center



Restricted Area Boundary



No Hunt Zones and No Ingress



No entry zone - MEC



Closed Gates



Roads



Water Bodies

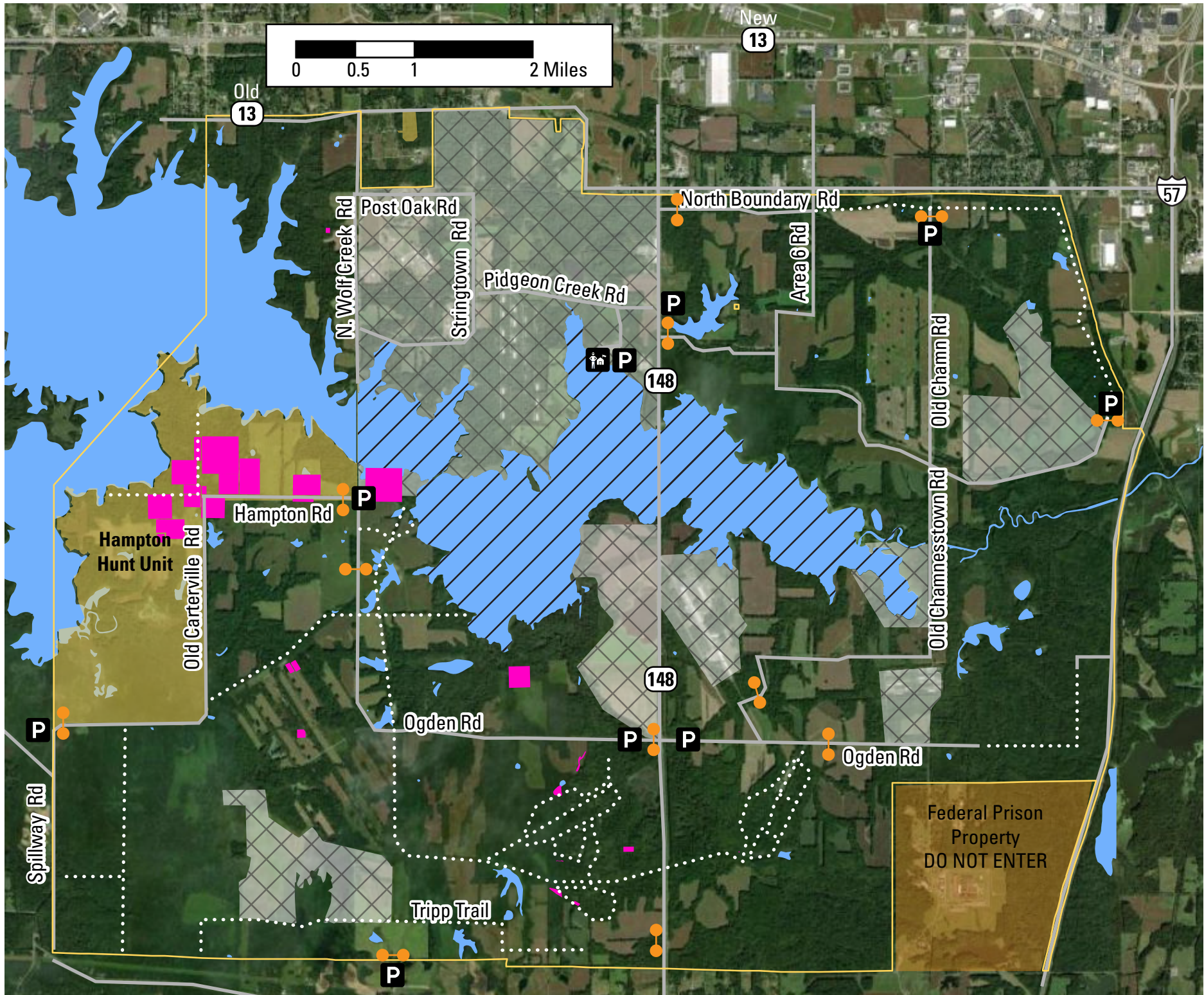


Water Open 3/1-10/15



Trails





The USFWS makes no warrant for the use of this map and cannot be held liable for actions or decisions based on map content. Boundaries posted in the field supersede all boundaries shown on map.

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